BETWEEN SULTANS AND IMAMS:
THE STATE AND POLITICAL ELITES IN YEMEN
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Abstract

This dissertation analyzes how, despite geographical, social, and religious complexities that undermine the state in contemporary Yemen, a stable political system existed in the region in the early modern period. It focuses on the transitions between three regimes in early modern Yemen – the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate (1506-1572), the Ottoman administration of Yemen (1538-1635), and the early Qasimid imamate (1597-1644) – and how these transformations affected local institutions and elites.

The dissertation makes three contributions. First, by relying on previously unstudied manuscript sources, it provides the first detailed analysis of the development of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate, the last pre-Ottoman Zaydi state that succeeded in uniting Upper and Lower Yemen. Second, by combining Ottoman Turkish and Arabic sources, it analyzes the structure of Ottoman rule in Zaydi Yemeni, its influence on the development of Zaydi elites and the institutions of the Qasimid imamate. The dissertation thus provides a new angle to Yemeni state history that is usually treated in isolation from external influence. Thirdly, by analyzing a unique case of an Arab state gaining independence from Ottoman rule in the early modern period, this study contributes to the study of the development of imperial peripheries. By reconnecting Yemeni history with structural developments in the Ottoman Empire, it aims to enrich our understanding of the effects of Ottoman rule on the development of the Arab Middle East.

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in their Ottoman collections. At the University of Notre Dame, I value Dr. Julia Schneider's support of my research agenda in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana microform collection. I also thank the librarians of the Leiden University Library Special Collections for helping me make the most of a week-long stay.

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Zaydi Studies workshop at the Institute for Advanced Studies that they organized in 2018 was one such formative experience. Through them, I was fortunate to have met Eirik Hovden, who generously shared his insights in Yemeni geography and Zaydi *fiqh,* and Daniel Varisco, who helped me clarify the tribal-state dimension and directed me to important sources on the history of Kawkabān. At Princeton University, I am grateful to Lara Harb who taught me to read pre-modern texts slow and fast; Eve Krakowski who by introducing me to the Cairo Geniza, showed me how to handle large corpora of primary sources. I am indebted to Nilüfer Hatemi for teaching me Modern and Ottoman Turkish and for guiding my forays into *mühimme* records, and to Amineh Mahallati for not giving up on my attempts to master Persian. I am grateful to the staff in the Near Eastern Studies department, the Graduate School, and the Davis International Center at Princeton University for their continuous assistance. In particular, I thank Angela Bryant, Karen Chirik, Cole Crittenden, Jim LaRegina, and Amy Psczolkowski for their support. In Italy, I am grateful to the Department of Religious Sciences at the Università Cattolica di Sacro Cuore, and Gian-Luca Potestà and Marco Rizzi for hosting me. In Milan, I especially thank Riccardo Benzoni, Carlo Bonifacio, Adriano Cecconi, Michela Iannone, Federico Ferrari, Carlo Mazzucchi, Rafaella Perin, Francesca Perugi, Anna Pessina, and Francesco Rossini. I am grateful to Arianna D'Ottone-Rambach for sharing her insights of Yemeni codicology and giving me the opportunity to discuss preliminary results of my research in a seminar at Sapienza Università di Roma. My greatest thanks for their hospitality and openness goes to the Minonne family: Francesca, Santino, and Anna Rita. In Istanbul, I thank the faculty of the Ibn Khaldun Summer Program in Ottoman Turkish, especially M. Fatih Çalişır and Faruk Yaslıçimen, for their generous help in teaching me how to navigate the Ottoman archives. I am also grateful to Turkana Allahverdiyeva, Daria Kovaleva, Melis Taner, and to Nuran, Duştuk and Perihan Uçok, for introducing me to the worlds of Istanbul, Konya, and

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Introduction

At the heart of this dissertation is a central question: how did pre-industrial states organize effective rule in complex socio-religious and geographical conditions? To answer this question this dissertation takes as its subject Yemen in the early modern period, as it was a time in which Yemen witnessed the development of three different state projects, fell under the direct influence of the Ottoman empire, and experienced lasting transformation of the local elite, including the appearance of a dynasty. To the modern observer, Yemen is a collapsed state. Whether labelled weak, failed, or fragile, the country's socio-political system has not produced a functioning state in the twenty-first century. This situation in modern Yemen is usually blamed on several factors: economic and infrastructural underdevelopment closely linked to the country's complex geography and troubled history in the twentieth century, tribalism, internal political tensions that overlap with both social and religious divisions, and international interference in domestic affairs.[1]

However, Yemen's complex geography and socio-religious landscape have not always been obstacles to state-building. The history of statehood in the region dates to the pre-Islamic period. Southern Arabia is one of the cradles of civilization and has been part of a connected socio-political history spanning the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa for many centuries.[2] In the

[1] The literature on Yemen's failure as a state in the twentieth and twenty first centuries is vast. Some notable works of the past decade that stress these factors in Yemen's current history include Paul Dresch, *A History of Modern Yemen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Noel Brehony, *Yemen Divided : The Story of a Failed State in South Arabia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011); Charles Schmitz, "Yemen: Failing State or Failing Politics?," in *Fragile Politics : Weak States in the Greater Middle East*, ed. Mehran Kamrava (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 29–51; Marieke Brandt, *Tribes and Politics in Yemen : A History of the Houthi Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Daniel Martin Varisco, "When the State Becomes a Non-State: Yemen between the Huthis, Hiral and al-Qaeda," in *Violent Radical Movements in the Arab World: The Ideology and Politics of Non-State Actors.*, ed. Peter Sluglett and Victor Katta (I.B. Tauris, 2019), 137–60; 212.

[2] Robert G. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs. From the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam* (London, New York: Routledge, 2001), 36–57. The high value placed on the geopolitical connection

Islamic period this region was the home to several notable dynasties that led resilient states. Instead of trying to explain why Yemen became a failed state in the twentieth century, this dissertation explains what the basic ingredients of statehood in Yemen were in the preindustrial period.

Scholarly approaches to the history of Yemen

Due to prevailing historiographical traditions, the history of Yemen appears to include two disconnected parts. This is not an unfounded perspective, as it is indeed the case that most state-building projects in Muslim Yemen originated in its southern, maritime regions. However, the resulting image of the overall trajectory of Yemeni state development appears uneven. On the one hand there exists a state-centered history of Lower Yemen that views this region from a connected perspective, represented, for example, by Eric Vallet's magisterial study of the role of trade in the Rasulid state of Lower Yemen.[3] This historiographical tradition often focuses on the ports of Lower Yemen, the trade connections of local regimes and presents the region as cosmopolitan, as is the case with the works of Roxani Eleni Margariti and Nancy Um.[4]

The historiographic tradition focused on Upper Yemen appears the opposite. The political history of Upper Yemen is written by anthropologists who focus on state-society relationships.

between Yemen and the Horn of Africa is visible in Ethiopian efforts to control Southern Arabia in the pre-Islamic period and the push against Ethiopia that is visible in early Islamic sources. Timothy Power, *The Red Sea from Byzantium to the Caliphate : AD 500-1000* (New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2012), 63–75, 91–96.

[3] Éric Vallet, *L'Arabie marchande: État et commerce sous les sultans rasūlides du Yémen (626-858/1229-1454)*, Bibliothèque historique des pays de l'Islam (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2010).

[4] Roxani Eleni Margariti, *Aden & the Indian Ocean Trade : 150 Years in the Life of a Medieval Arabian Port*, Islamic Civilization & Muslim Networks (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Nancy Um, *The Merchant Houses of Mocha: Trade and Architecture in an Indian Ocean Port*, University of Washington Publications on the Near East (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009).

Anthropological research in Yemen has yielded rich studies of the structure of tribal society and its opposition to the idea of a centralized state. Works by scholars such as Najwa Adra and Shelagh Weir framed the discussion of tribal systems in Yemen as a mode of resilient existence independent from the state.[5] Paul Dresch and Andre Gingrich present the history of statehood in the Zaydi highlands as a swinging pendulum of a relationship between the state and the tribes, in which the tribes continuously prove that they do not need states.[6] Jeffrey Meissner's longue-durée research, informed by anthropological fieldwork, on the history and society of Zaydi Yemen also highlighted the constraints imposed on Zaydi statehood by tribal society.[7] The downside of this approach is that the Yemeni highlands are seen through the lens of tribal history and unchanging local social structures that appear in constant opposition to the idea and practice of statehood, and the Zaydi state itself, despite its longevity, appears as some peripheral and sectarian misunderstanding.

Related to this view of the northern highlands as an enclave is the strand of Zaydi intellectual history that appears of particular interest to scholars due to the preservation of the Muʿtazili philosophical tradition. This is a long tradition of scholarship that dates back to the early twentieth

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[5] Anthropological research in Yemen yielded rich studies of the structure of tribal society and its opposition to the idea of a centralized state. See, in particular, Najwa Adra, "Qabyala: The Tribal Concept in the Central Highlands of the Yemen Arab Republic" (Ph.D., Pennsylvania, United States, Temple University, 1982), 29–82; Shelagh Weir, *A Tribal Order: Politics and Law in the Mountains of Yemen*, Modern Middle East Series (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 229–36.

[6] Paul Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen* (Oxford / New York, NY: Clarendon Press / Oxford University Press, 1989); Paul Dresch, "Political History," in *The Rules of Barat. Tribal Documents from Yemen : Texts and Translation*, Textes et Documents Sur La Péninsule Arabique (Sanaa: Centre français d'archéologie et de sciences sociales, 2016), 60–74, http://books.openedition.org/cefas/841; Andre Gingrich, "Tribes and Rulers in Northern Yemen," in *Studies in Oriental Culture and History: Festschrift for Walter Dostal* (Frankfurt am Main, 1993), 253–80.

[7] Jeffrey R. Meissner, "Tribes at the Core: Legitimacy, Structure, and Power in Zaydi Yemen" (PhD dissertation, New York NY, Columbia University, 1987).

century and works of Arabists such as Rudolf Strothmann and Cornelis van Arendonk, who laid the foundation of the study of Zaydi history through the Zaydi written heritage.[8] The pioneering work of Wilferd Madelung, followed by contributions of Sabine Schmidtke, Hasan Ansari, Jan Thiele and other scholars made this aspect of Zaydi history highly visible.[9] David Thomas Gochenour's analysis of the expansion of Zaydism in the northern highlands remains an impressive example of how the intellectual history approach can be combined with a careful treatment of state-tribe relations in the region.[10] In recent years, this historiographical tradition has been enriched by a slowly growing body of scholarship on connections between the Zaydis and their Lower Yemeni neighbors as well as more distant regions, which changes the current view of Zaydis as closed off to outside influence.[11] Moreover, the development of scholarly understanding of Zaydi legal and theological thought made research on political theory and its relation to

[8] A detailed analysis of the history of Zaydi studies as a subfield can be found in Sabine Schmidtke, "The History of Zaydī Studies: An Introduction," *Arabica* 59, no. 3–4 (2012): 185–99.

[9] See, for example, Wilferd Madelung, *Der Imam al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm und die Glaubenslehre der Zaiditen*, Studien zur Sprache, Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Orients (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1965); Hassan Ansari and Sabine Schmidtke, "The Literary-Religious Tradition among 7th/13th Century Yemenī Zaydīs: The Formation of the Imām al-Mahdī Li-Dīn Allāh Ahmad b. al-Husayn b. al-Qāsim (d. 656/1258)," *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 2, no. 2 (January 1, 2011): 165–222; Jan Thiele, "Propagating Muʿtazilism in the VIth/XIIth Century Zaydiyya: The Role of al-Ḥasan al-Raṣṣāṣ," *Arabica* 57, no. 5–6 (2010): 536–58; Hassan Ansari, "The Shīʿī Reception of Muʿtazilism (I): Zaydīs," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 181–95.

[10] David Thomas Gochenour, "The Penetration of Zaydi Islam into Early Medieval Yemen" (PhD Dissertation, Harvard, Harvard University, 1984).

[11] The research of Ansari and Schmidtke on intellectual connections of Yemeni Zaydis is particularly insightful. See Hassan Ansari and Sabine Schmidtke, "Between Aleppo and Ṣaʿda: The Zaydī Reception of the Imāmī Scholar Ibn al-Biṭrīq al-Ḥillī," *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 4, no. 2 (January 1, 2013): 158–98; Hassan Ansari and Sabine Schmidtke, "The Cultural Transfer of Zaydī and Non-Zaydī Religious Literature from Northern Iran to Yemen (Sixth/Twelfth Century through Eighth/Fourteenth Century)," in *Globalization of Knowledge in the Post-Antique Mediterranean*, ed. Sonja Brentjes and Jürgen Renn (London/New York: Routledge, 2016), 141–66.

historical political structures of the Zaydi state possible, as is shown in the works of Bernard Haykel and Tomislav Klarić in relation to the Qasimid period,[12] and recent studies by Heiss and Hovden on the relation between intellectual competition among the Zaydis and the shape of the state and society in the region.[13] Nevertheless the reclusive tribal order of the northern Yemeni highlands remains a persistent topos in perceived opposition to the efficient trade-focused state formations of Lower Yemen. This appears to confirm the adage that Yemen had always been a divided territory, never ruled by a unified polity, and that the northern highlands (and by implication Zaydism, which dominates them) are an Arabian version of an ungovernable and stateless Zomia.[14]

This dissertation argues that an Upper Yemeni, northern form of statehood, founded in the tenth century by a group of sayyids from the Hijaz, who belonged to a sectarian Shiʿite group, the Zaydis, was a resilient and efficient political project. During a long sixteenth century (1506-1644) the Zaydi imamate transformed from its 'classical' version to a dynastic state and experienced an expansion of its bureaucracy and army. Early modern Yemen was first ruled by imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn (r. 1506-1547, d. 1557), who unified Upper and Lower Yemen for the first time in Zaydi history. After several decades of unity, the Yemeni state faced a challenge that endangered

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[12] Bernard Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muhammad al-Shawkānī*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilisation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Tomislav Klarić, "Untersuchungen zur politischen Geschichte der Qāsimidischen Dynastie (11./17. Jh.)" (PhD Dissertation, Göttingen, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, 2007).

[13] Eirik Hovden, "Competing Visions of Welfare in the Zaydi Community of Medieval South Arabia," in *Meanings of Community across Medieval Eurasia*, ed. Eirik Hovden, Christina Lutter, and Walter Pohl (Brill, 2016), 338–61; Johann Heiss and Eirik Hovden, "Competing Visions of Community in Mediaeval Zaydī Yemen," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 59, no. 3 (2016): 366–407.

[14] Zomia is a geographical term used to describe the highlands of Southeast Asia; an influential analysis of the development of this region that promoted a vision of state-less history is James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*, Yale Agrarian Studies Series (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009).

its survival, as it was conquered by the Ottoman Empire (1536-1635). However, after this interaction with one of the most powerful empires of its time, the Zaydi imamate did not disappear. Instead, a new imam, al-Manṣūr Qāsim (r. 1597-1620) rose to power and laid the foundation of a first Zaydi dynasty that overthrew the Ottomans and ruled Yemen until the mid-twentieth century. Throughout this century three political projects were launched in Yemen and finally the one emerging out of Upper Yemen, the Qasimid imamate, survived, providing long-term solutions to Yemen's religious, social, and geographical divisions.

The importance of the Ottoman connection

In addition to stressing the state-building and dynastic capacities of the Zaydi society of the northern highlands, this dissertation explores the historical connections between Yemen and the Ottoman Empire in order to analyze why the Zaydi imamate gained independence from direct Ottoman imperial rule and what impact Ottoman rule over Yemen had on the development of statehood in the region.

The study of Yemen under Ottoman rule dates to the late eighteenth century and is closely connected to European interests in the Ottoman Empire. In 1789 Silvestre de Sacy, the founder of modern Arabic studies in France, published summaries of texts concerning Ottoman rule in Yemen (BNF Arabe 1651) alongside a detailed summary of al-Nahrawālī's *al-Barq al-yamānī.*[15] A few decades later, in 1838, the Dutch theologian and philologist Antonie Rutgers published a

[15] Antoine Isaac Silvestre de Sacy, "Le lever des astres, ou, Particularités de l'histoire du Yémen," *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque du roi* iv (1789): 505–9; Antoine Isaac Silvestre de Sacy, "Le livre des vœux accomplis, ou, Histoire du gouvernement de Behram," *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque du roi* iv (1789): 512–37; Antoine Isaac Silvestre de Sacy, "La fourde du Yémen, ou, conquête du Yémen par les Othomans," *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque du roi* iv (1789): 412–504.

translation into Latin of another key source – the biography of Ḥasan Pasha by al-Duʿāmī (whose name he read as al-Ruʿāmī).[16]

When, in the late nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire reasserted its presence in Yemen, demand for a long-term understanding of Yemen's history surged. Historical arguments in support of the establishment of the empire's direct presence in the region were particularly sought. This need was met in 1875 by Aḥmed Rāshid Pasha, an Ottoman officer who served in the Yemeni highlands. By combining his first-hand knowledge of the geography and current affairs in the region with a compilation of primary sources on the history of Yemen, he wrote the two-volume *Tārīkh-i Yemen ve Ṣanʿāʾ,* a synthetic history of Yemen from its origins to the nineteenth century. This volume was the first attempt to systematically approach available sources on Yemen's history, particularly during the 'Ottoman century', albeit for political reasons.[17]

Another by-product of the reopening of Yemen within the Ottoman Empire was a frenzy of manuscript collecting, in which Europeans and Ottomans competed against each other. Ali Emiri was one such Ottoman bureaucrat with a penchant for collecting.[18] His efforts were dwarfed

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[16] ʿĀmir b. Muḥammad al-Ruʿāmī, *Historia Jemanae sub Hasano Pascha quam e codice Ms. Arabic Bibliothecae Academiae Lugduno-Batavae*, ed. and trans. Antonius Rutgers (Leiden: S. et J. Luchtmans, 1838).

[17] Aḥmed Rāshid Pasha, *Tārīkh-i Yemen ve Ṣanʿāʾ*, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Basiret Matbaası, 1291). On Aḥmed Rāshid Pasha see Thomas Kuehn, *Empire, Islam, and the Politics of Difference. Ottoman Rule in Yemen, 1849-1919*, The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2011), 53, fn. 2. On the link between nineteen-century Ottoman governance in Yemen and interest in history, see Thomas Kuehn, "'We Know Nothing About Yemen!' Ottoman Imperial Governance in Southwest Arabia and the Politics of Knowledge Production, 1871–1914," *Journal of Arabian Studies* 8, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 10–11.

[18] The Yemeni manuscripts and photographs that Ali Emiri collected during his year-long stay in Yemen are now preserved at the Millet Yazma Eser Kutuphanesi alongside the rest of his collection. On Ali Emiri as a late nineteenth century Ottoman official and his collection see Klaus Kreiser, "ʿAlī Emīrī (1858-1924) - ein türkischer Bürokrat und Intellektueller im Jemen," in *Studies in Oriental Culture and History. Festschrift for Walter Dostal*, ed. Andre Gingrich et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993), 199–221.

by Giuseppe Caprotti, a long-time resident of Ṣanʿāʾ, whose collection of over two thousand manuscripts is now preserved in Milan, as well as Berlin, Munich, and Vienna.[19]

Due to the difficulty of the languages of the primary sources and the shortage of critical editions, the subsequent study of early modern Ottoman rule in Yemen took two shapes – the study of Arabic sources on the period and the analysis of Ottoman Turkish documents. Few scholars have been able to bring the two strands together, notable among them Richard Blackburn, Jane Hathaway, and Salih Özbaran. Samer Traboulsi's work on Yemeni Ismāʿīlīs in the period of the Ottoman conquest, while limited to a faction of Yemen's population, is indispensable to the study of Ottoman policy in the region.[20] The discussion of Ottoman rule in the Red Sea region and Arabia tends to revolve around questions of Ottoman geopolitics and trade in the region, Giancarlo Casale's monograph being a prime example of recent scholarship in this domain.[21] Despite the insights of such connected history approaches, they often bypass the discussion of the evolution of Ottoman administrative practice in the region and its long-term impact on local socio-political development.

As a result, this dissertation seeks to build on the results of Ottoman socio-economic studies prior to the cultural turn. Of particular relevance are the works of Linda Darling, Karen Barkey, and Baki Tezcan who convincingly analyze the transformation of the Ottoman administrative and

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[19] Parts of the Caprotti collection were sold by him to other European visitors to Yemen, in particular, Eduard Glaser, under whose name they ended up in Berlin and Vienna. On Caprotti's three decades in Yemen as the only resident European see Arianna D'Ottone, "Giuseppe Caprotti et son double – entre manuscrits et monnaies yéménites," *Les Chroniques du manuscrit au Yémen*, no. 9 (28) (July 2019): 46–55.

[20] Samer Traboulsi, "The Ottoman Conquest of Yemen: The Ismaili Perspective," in *The Arab Lands in the Ottoman Empire: Essays in Honor of Professor Caesar Farah*, ed. Jane Hathaway, Minnesota Studies in Early Modern History (Minneapolis, MN: Center for Early Modern History, 2009), 41–60.

[21] Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration.* Oxford / New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010.

military order in the seventeenth century.[22] The research of Metin Kunt on the changing fates of Ottoman military elites and the analysis of religious scholars' careers in the Ottoman administration form other building blocks for this project.[23] Studies on Ottoman rule in various provinces, in particular, in the Arab lands, and the flexible integration policies exercised in the empire in its peripheries[24] is another important strand of literature that this dissertation engages to analyze how the changing structure of the Ottoman Empire influenced Yemeni socio-political development.

Institutions, elites, social networks, and hierarchy

The history of state formation and state development is probably one of the most salient questions in historiography, hence any type of overview would appear superficial. For a long time, a major issue in this immense historiographic field, especially in scholarship on European states,

[22] Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization*, The Wilder House Series in Politics, History, and Culture (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); Linda T. Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy. Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire, 1560-1660*, The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage. Politics, Society and Economy (Leiden / New York / Köln: E.J. Brill, 1996); Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilisation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[23] İ. Metin Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650*, The Modern Middle East Series (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); Madeline C. Zilfi, "Elite Circulation in the Ottoman Empire: Great Mollas of the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 26, no. 3 (January 1, 1983): 318–64; Abdurrahman Atçil, *Scholars and Sultans in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[24] Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule. Institutions, Waqf and Architecture in Cairo (16th and 17th Centuries)* (Leiden / New York / Köln: E.J. Brill, 1994); Dror Ze'evi, *An Ottoman Century. The District of Jerusalem in the 1600s.*, SUNY Series in Medieval Middle East History (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996); Gábor Kármán and Lovro Kuncevic, eds., *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Bruce A. Masters, *The Arabs of the Ottoman Empire, 1516-1918. A Social and Cultural History* (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

was the focus on searching for a genealogy of the modern nation-state among pre-industrial states.[25] In the past decades this historiographical tradition is being pushed aside by a wide range of scholarly trends, most of which ascertain the importance of studying pre-modern political systems on their own terms.[26] This move is complemented by an expanding study of empires with a strong focus on comparisons, connections, and contrasts between structures of different imperial formations.[27] In this latter field there is more room for the discussion of non-European empires. This approach, however, ignores the development of polities that were of a smaller scale than an empire, as in the case of the Zaydi imamate in Yemen, yet were clearly original forms of statehood. By analyzing a state that is not an early modern empire, this dissertation expands our understanding of the range of forms of government and institutions that were available in the Muslim world in the pre-industrial period and thus shifts our perception of its early modern political landscape.[28]

To approach the complex process of state formation I focus on four phenomena: institutions, elites, hierarchy, and networks. By combining the focus on state institutions (such as the court, the army, and the bureaucracy) and elites I analyze correlations between state formation,

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[25] A useful overview of the main historiographical trends in the historiography of European states is provided in John Watts, *The Making of Polities: Europe, 1300-1500*, Cambridge Medieval Textbooks (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 9–34.

[26] Woodside's work on pre-1800 East Asian state development is one example of careful treatment of local traditions of statehood and their modernizing potential. Alexander Woodside, *Lost Modernities: China, Vietnam, Korea, and the Hazards of World History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[27] Some examples of such approaches relevant to the early modern Muslim world include Barkey, *Empire of Difference*; Peter F. Bang and C. A. Bayly, eds., *Tributary Empires in Global History*, Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series. (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Giuseppe Marcocci, "Too Much to Rule: States and Empires across the Early Modern World," *Journal of Early Modern History*, no. 20 (2016): 511–25.

[28] One attempt to analyze the changing socio-political landscape of the Muslim world in the early modern period and its implications for later development in the region is the collective volume positioned as a textbook: Philippe Bourmaud et al., *Histoire des pays d'islam: de la conquête de Constantinople à l'âge des révolutions*, ed. Pascal Buresi, Collection U. Histoire. (Malakoff: Armand Colin, 2018).

transformation, and development and the shifts in the structure of the elite.[29] This is a necessary move for two reasons. First, it allows the historian to show the interconnection between the resilience of institutions in pre-modern societies and the survival of certain elite groups. In the case of Yemen, it allows to take into consideration the development of three main social groups – the sayyids, the scholars and the tribes. Secondly, it allows to focus on dynasty-building efforts of members of the elite. Such an analysis of the transformations of the Yemeni state elite in the early modern period requires an analysis of interwoven mechanisms of elite production and maintenance – heredity, education, and marriage. Heredity allowed Yemeni elite families to transfer capital (social, economic, political) between generations; education functioned as a vehicle of heredity as well as a social lift supported by relationships of patronage and loyalty; finally, marriage supported horizontal links between elite families.

To further elucidate the importance of human relationships and efficient social configurations to state formation, I rely on a combined study of social networks and hierarchy to make sense of how exactly elite groups formed and maintained their grasp of power. The study of social networks allows to map the horizontal connections that held the elite together; the same social networks supported the continuity of institutions and allowed rulers to maintain a support base. However, the goal is not simply to identify these social networks, but also to analyze how they manifested in the early modern state. The answer to this question requires a study of hierarchy, in particular decision-making processes, and power distribution. The resilience of hierarchy is crucial to the survival of a state and is supported in pre-modern societies through relations of patronage,

[29] Families and institutions are two main systems that preserve the continuity of a premodern state and its cultural practices. Barry J. Kemp, *Ancient Egypt : Anatomy of a Civilization*, Third edition. (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 8; Marina Rustow, *The Lost Archive. Traces of a Caliphate in a Cairo Synagogue*, Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Ancient to the Modern World (Princeton / Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020), 10, 62.

loyalty, and gratitude.[30] The ways in which a new type of social hierarchy was established in Yemen, and the ways in which successive states coopted local elite social groups in exchange for integration in this hierarchy, are, therefore, another facet of the present study.

Sources

This dissertation became possible due to the work of Yemeni scholars and the unprecedented attention of the scholarly community to Yemen's manuscript heritage.[31] Yemeni scholars such as Ismāʿīl al-Akwaʿ, ʿAbd al-Salām Wajīh, Āmat al-Malik al-Thawr, Zayd al-Wazīr, Ibrāhīm al-Maqḥafī, Muḥammad Jāzim, and Mustafā Sālim, a pioneer of the study of Yemen under Ottoman rule, despite ongoing crises in Yemen, continue to publish critical editions of otherwise difficult to access historical texts, research monographs, biographical and geographical dictionaries and encyclopedias, all of which remain indispensable tools for a historian of Yemen.

The spread of digitization initiatives further expanded opportunities for research. Notable among these efforts are "The Yemeni Manuscripts Digitization Initiative" (YMDI) in collaboration with Princeton University Library, "The Zaydi Manuscript Tradition" (ZMT), a collaboration of the Institute for Advanced Studies (Princeton) and the Hill Manuscript Museum and Library, and the digitization efforts of the Imam Zayd b. ʿAlī Cultural Foundation (IZbACF), currently hosted at the Ministry of Awqāf of Oman.[32] These efforts made it possible for scholars to make

[30] The study of patronage and its relation to statehood is one manifestation of this approach. See, for example, Roy P. Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society*, Princeton Studies on the Near East. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980).
[31] Sabine Schmidtke, "Preserving, Studying, and Democratizing Access to the World Heritage of Islamic Manuscripts: The Zaydī Tradition," *Chroniques Du Manuscrit Au Yémen* 23 (2017): 103–88.
[32] An important discussion of the ethical issues of digital access to Yemeni manuscript heritage can be found in Nancy Um, "Yemeni Manuscripts Online: Digitization in an Age of War and

new interventions in the study of Zaydi Yemen by relying on the Zaydi manuscript heritage, previously a difficult to access and therefore understudied corpus of sources.

The source base of the dissertation includes a variety of sources. Linguistically, they include sources in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish. Regionally, they include sources produced in Upper and Lower Yemen, the Hijaz, Egypt, and the Ottoman imperial center. From the religious and political point of view their authors had Zaydi pro-imamate, Zaydi pro-Ottoman, Shafiʿi pro-Ottoman, Shafīʿī pro-Zaydi and purely Ottoman-centered allegiances. The typology that appears most useful, however, is based on genres.

The two main genres of sources overlap with the two linguistic groups: narrative sources are predominantly in Arabic, sources in Ottoman Turkish are predominantly documentary. The narrative sources include family histories, biographies of rulers (*sīra*s), chronicles, biographical dictionaries, and genealogies. Documentary sources include financial registers, *mühimme,* i.e., records of imperial Ottoman orders, letters, and manuscript marginalia. The last subgroup is usually treated within the discipline of codicology; however, for the purpose of this dissertation marginal records of patrons, owners and readers of manuscripts were treated as documents of the period that can be used as witnesses of the rise and fall of elites in a changing political world.

Central to this dissertation is the attention to history writing as a mirror of social and political transformation. These connected processes are most visible in the transformations of the genre of the *sīra,* or biography. *Sīra* is a term with a wide semantic field in the Islamic world. It can mean "way of life", or "record of a memorable action". In Islamic law, this term refers to war

Loss," *Manuscript Studies: A Journal of the Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies* 5, no. 1 (May 7, 2020): 1–44.

conduct. Most importantly, *sīra* denotes a biography.[33] The most famous *sīra* in the Islamic world is the *sīra* of the Prophet Muḥammad, first compiled by Ibn Isḥaq (d. 150/767) and Ibn Hishām (d. 218/833), two early Muslim historians. [34] Several other types of *sīra*s existed in the Islamic world – biographies of prominent people such as rulers, scholars, Sufis were one type, popular *sīras* (Volksroman) of historical and mythological figures were another.[35] In Zaydi Yemen, *sīra* designated a genre of historical writing dedicated to the life of an individual imam; however, the corpus used in this dissertation also includes *sīras* of Ottoman governors. The structure of these texts, inspired by the *Sīra* of the Prophet, includes sections on military exploits, written documents, sermons and speeches as well as poetry composed in the honor of the imam. *Sīra*s were transmitted in several ways – as stand-alone texts (often copied in a collection of texts, *majmūʿ*) or in abridged form in collections of *sīra*s of imams. They represented a cornerstone genre of history writing for the Zaydi community. Every imam had a *sīra* written about him, although not all the original stand-alone *sīra*s survived.[36]

In the period from the late fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, in response to socio-political shifts, Zaydi history writing transformed, mirroring the expansion of bureaucracy and the development of a dynastic state. These changes are visible in a subset of *sīras* that underlie this study: the three *sīras* of imam al-Mutawakkil ʿalā allāh Sharaf al-Dīn Yaḥyā b. Shams al-Dīn (d.

[33] W. Raven, "Sīra," in *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2012.
[34] The biographies of the Prophet were a constantly transforming genre of writing as demonstrated by Tarif Khalidi. Tarif Khalidi, *Images of Muhammad: Narratives of the Prophet in Islam Across the Centuries* (New York: Doubleday, 2009).
[35] Raven, W., "Sīra"; Heath, P., "Sīra Shaʿbiyya", in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*.
[36] Hassan Ansari provides a fairly complete list of *sīras* that have survived in manuscript copies in libraries around the world. Hassan Ansari, "Az ganjinehā-ye noskhehā-ye khaṭṭī: menābiʿ-i tārikhī ve rijālī darbārreye Yemen," Barresīhā-ye tārikhī, accessed January 13, 2019, http://ansari.kateban.com/post/820.

965/1558), the biography of al-Nāṣir Ḥasan b. Aḥmad (d. 996/1588), and the biographies of the first two imams of the Qasimid dynasty – al-Manṣūr Qāsim b. Muḥammad (d. 1029/1620) and al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad b. al-imām Qāsim (d. 1054/1645). These early modern *sīra*s produced an image of the imam as a political leader, a scholar, and a focal point of the Zaydi community. These goals of the *sīra* composition are reflected in the set structure of the biography developed by *sīra* authors. It included the genealogy of the imam, a description of his studies, lists of the works he wrote and students who studied with him, samples of his letters and speeches, a description of the character of the imam and his physical appearance. The largest section of the biography started with the *daʿwa*, call for the imamate, and was arranged in a chronological, year-by-year, order. It included descriptions of historical events which happened during the reign of the imam and poetry written on the occasion. Each of the sections catered to the functions of the *sīra* in creating the image of the imam. Thus, the sections on the education and teaching activities of the imam expressed his scholarly ambitions, whereas the discussion of his ancestors and their merits provided room to show the imam's ties to the Zaydi elites.

What makes the *sīra*s of imams unique is that they had functions that went beyond the individual biography of the ruler. They were the chronicles of Zaydi history. This peculiar arrangement explains the conspicuous absence of chronicle writing in the Zaydi historiographic tradition, with the notable exception of the Zaydi historian ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh. *Sīra*s of imams also served as biographical dictionaries of people whom the imam encountered. Being mentioned in a *sīra* was considered an honor.[37] This prosopographical function of the *sīra* became particularly visible in the Qasimid period when the biographers of imams started to include detailed lists of supporters

[37] Thus, in *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* the author remarks about a close supporter of the imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, al-Nāṣir b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad (d. 924/1518), that he was mentioned and described in the *sīra* of the imam. *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, f. 40a.

of the imam. Until the fundamental biographical dictionary of Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ Ibn Abī al-Rijāl (d. 1092/1681) was composed, sīras largely replaced biographical dictionaries in Zaydi society.

The appearance of new genres of history writing in Yemen is one of the responses to the socio-political transformations of the early modern period. One such notable genre is family history. It came to full fruition during the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate due to the consolidation of the leading sayyid families around the strong figure of the imam, a process discussed in chapter 4. One example of a family history from this period is the magisterial *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* a work covering over four centuries of history of the al-Wazīr family, a powerful sayyid clan.[38] This history, a work of four generations of sayyids from one family,[39] celebrates the role of sayyid in the pre-Ottoman Zaydi imamate by including over one thousand individual records, among them biographies of women, scholars, military leaders, merchants, and farmers.

With the onset of Ottoman rule in Yemen, history writing had to respond to the challenge of interaction with a state of a different kind. Several examples of hybrid Ottoman-Zaydi manuscripts are known, indicating that elite strata of Zaydi society were interested in integration with the empire. One notable example is the biography of the Ottoman governor Ḥasan Paşa written by ʿĀmir b. Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Duʿāmī.[40] This biography builds on the traditions of Zaydi *sīra*

[38] Only four copies of this text are known, and all are preserved at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana. They are NF C.35.ar, NF D.556.ar, NF D.537.ar, NF E.8.ar.

[39] The text was compiled by Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh Ibn al-Wazīr (d. 985/1577) based on the notes and stories collected by his ancestors: al-Hādī b. Ibrāhīm b. ʿAlī, known as *al-akbar*, the greater or the elder (d. 822/1419), his grandson Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. al-Hādī (d. 897/1492), and his great-great-grandson al-Hādī b. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. al-Hādī, or al-Hādī *al-aṣghar*, the smaller or younger (d. 923/1517). *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* NF D. 556.ar, f. 35a.

[40] In his signature in the colophon, he wrote that he was the son and grandson of shaykhs, tribal leaders. The author's surname – al-Duʿāmī – possibly refers to Banū al-Duʿām, a tribe from the northern highlands. Ibrāhīm Aḥmad al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam al-buldān wa-l-qabāʾil al-yamanīya* (Ṣanʿāʾ / Beirut: Dār al-kalima li-l-ṭibāʿa wa-l-nashr wa-l-tawzīʿ / al-Muʾassasa al-jāmiʿīya li-l-dirāsāt wa-l-nashr wa-l-tawzīʿ, 2002), 611–12. One later source suggests al-Rughāfī for a reading

composition as it focuses on the events that the governor participated in and creates an image of him as a just ruler. The work that al Duʿāmī produced is hybrid not only in its content, but also in its form. It is an Ottoman manuscript in its execution – the layout of the text with its golden frame and colorful incipit headpiece is reminiscent of the lavish manuscripts preserved in the libraries of Ottoman sultans. The text and the manuscript itself were thus a political statement, a symbol of both Ottoman power in Yemen and local support for it.

This biography of the Ottoman governor was only one among several hybrid historical texts that was composed in the Ottoman century in Zaydi Yemen.[41] The composition of the first chronicle in the history of Zaydi Yemen is also linked to the interactions of the Ottoman century in Yemen. The first chronicler of Yemen was ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh, the great-grandson of imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, an astronomer, litterateur, and member of the court of Raghib Meḥmed Pasha (governor of Yemen in 1025-1030/1616-1621).[42] Before ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh Zaydi historians were certainly familiar with the annalistic style. However, the chronicle, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ fī*

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of his surname, but this seems to be a mistake. ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad al-Ḥibshī, *Maṣādir al-fikr al-islāmī fī-l-Yaman* (Abu Ẓabī: al-Majmaʿ al-thaqāfī, 2004), 508.

[41] In neighboring Arabian regions at the time works under the patronage of Ottoman governors were also produced. One example is the work of the Meccan resident Qutb al-dīn al-Nahrawālī (d. 990/1582) who composed a history of Sinan Paşa's expedition to Yemen. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī fī al-fatḥ al-ʿuthmānī: tārīkh al-Yaman fī al-qarn al-ʿāshir al-hijrī maʿa tawassuʿ fī akhbār ghazawāt al-jarākisa wa-l-ʿuthmānīyīn li dhalik al-quṭr*, ed. Aḥmad al-Jāsir, Nuṣūṣ wa abḥāth jughrāfīya wa tārīkhīya ʿan jazīrat al-ʿarab 6 (Riyāḍ: Dār al-Yamāma li-l-baḥth wa-l-tarjama wa-l-nashr, 1967). Another hybrid work is *ʿIqd al-laʾāl,* a biography of Jaʿfer Pasha, an Ottoman governor of Yemen, currently preserved in the Khuda Bakhsh library.

[42] ʿĪsā Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ fī mā ḥadatha baʿd al-miʾa al-tāsiʿa min al-fitan wa-l-futūḥ*, ed. Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad al-Muqaḥḥafī (Ṣanʿāʾ: Markaz ʿibādī li-l-dirāsāt wa-l-nashr, 1424), 7–8. Charles Rieu, *Supplement to the Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London: Longmans, 1894), no. 588. Soudan, *Le Yémen ottoman d'après la chronique d'al-Mawzaʿī al-Iḥsān fī dukhūl mamlakat al-Yaman taḥt ẓill ʿadālat Āl ʿUṯmān*, 8. İdris Bostan, "Yemen: Osmanlı Dönemi," *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi (DİA)* (Istanbul, 2013), 409, http://www.islamansiklopedisi.info/dia/pdf/c43/c430229.pdf.

mā jarā baʿd al-miʾa al-tāsiʿa min al-fitan wa-l-futūḥ, offered a breakaway from tradition.[43] In response to the tastes of his Ottoman audience, the author mentioned events that took place outside of Yemen or the Arabian Peninsula; he also mentioned the names of ruling Ottoman sultans and any updates concerning the fates of previous Ottoman governors of Yemen. In this way he was speaking to an imperial audience, his patrons from among the Ottomans and local supporters of Ottoman rule. In addition, ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh balanced his narrative between an alliance with the Ottomans and his family pride, merging the achievements of family history from the previous period with the new requirements of his court position. It is most probably due to the recognizably Zaydi side of his annalistic work that it became appealing to Zaydi readers. Unlike the hybrid governor's biographies mentioned earlier, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ* enjoyed considerable success in Yemen and was often copied.[44]

The post-Ottoman transformations Zaydi Yemen into a dynastic state is reflected in the history production in the region. In the early Qasimid period traditional Zaydi genres of history-writing flourished anew, and already during the rule of imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad biographies of imams started to be composed once again.[45] In the early Qasimid period several

[43] The chronicle of ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh was continued by his sons, who did not have the same affiliation with the court of the Ottoman governor due to the deterioration of Ottoman rule in Yemen. Due to this their focus became increasingly limited to Yemeni events. NF D.553.ar, ff. 182a.-225a; NF D.570.ar, ff. 216b-223a.

[44] Among these copies are Biblioteca Ambrosiana: NF F.240.ar, NF D.371.ar, NF D.406.ar, NF D.427.ar, NF D.553.ar, NF D.570.ar, NF D.284.ar; Princeton University Library Garrett 9 and Garrett 421 Bq; Leiden University Library Or. 6999; Millet Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi AE Arabi 2378, AE Arabi 2385. The editions are ʿĪsā Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ fī mā ḥadatha baʿd al-miʾa al-tāsiʿa min al-fitan wa-l-futūḥ*, ed. Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad al-Maqḥafī (Ṣanʿāʾ: Markaz ʿAbbādī li-l-dirāsāt wa-l-nashr, 1424); ʿĪsā Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ fī mā jarā baʿd al-miʾa al-tāsiʿa min al-fitan wa-l-futūḥ*, ed. ʿUbayd ʿAṭīya Ḥasan Yūsuf al-Lahībī, 1st ed., Silsilat al-rasāʾil wa-l-dirāsāt al-jāmiʿīya (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmīya, 1436).

[45] Muṭahhar al-Jurmūzī worked on biographies of all three first Qasimid imams. Muṭahhar b. Muḥammad al-Jurmūzī, *Kitāb al-nubdha al-mushīra ilā jumal min ʿuyūn al-sīra fī akhbār mawlānā amīr al-muʾminīn wa sayyid al-muslimīn al-manṣūr bi-llāh rabb al-ʿālamīn al-Qāsim*

developments took place: the first biographical dictionary was composed, reflecting an increased professionalization in society; family history gained new momentum and genealogical genres began to develop reflecting the new status of sayyids and tribes; and the Qasimid imams were inscribed into the chain of Zaydi rulers.

One of the most valuable sources on the earliest years of the Qasimid imamate is the chronicle of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Sharafī (d. 1055/1645), a witness of the rise of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim and a close supporter of both the founder of the Qasimid dynasty and his heir, imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad.[46] The book, entitled *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa fī aʾimmat al-zaydīya,* is framed as a commentary on a pre-Ottoman summary of Zaydi history, *al-Bassāma al-ṣughrā*.[47] The purpose of this framing is to connect the new, Qasimid imamate, with its pre-Ottoman predecessors. To demonstrate how recent Zaydi history fits into the narrative, al-Sharafī dedicated a major part of the concluding, third, volume, to the rise of the Qasimid dynasty.[48] Al-Sharafī had access to a

b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī (Ṣanʿāʾ: Maktabat al-Yaman al-kubrā, 1980); Muṭahhar b. Muḥammad al-Jurmūzī, *Bināʾ al-dawla al-qāsimīya fī-l-Yaman fi ʿahd al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad ibn al-Qāsim, 990-1054 / 1582-1644. Maʿa taḥqīq makhṭūṭat al-Jawhara al-munīra fī jumal min ʿuyūn al-sīra (juzʾān) li-l-Muṭahhar ibn Muḥammad al-Jurmūzī. Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, ed. Amat al-Malik Ismāʿīl Qāsim al-Thawr, 3 vols. (Ṣanʿāʾ: Muʾassasat al-imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-thaqāfīya, 2008); Muṭahhar b. Muḥammad al-Jurmūzī, *Tuḥfat al-asmāʿ wa-l-anṣār bi-mā fī-l-sīra al-mutawakkilīya min gharāʾib al-akhbār*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm b. ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Hajarī, 2 vols. (Ṣanʿāʾ: Muʾassasat al-imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-thaqāfīya, 2002).

[46] He was a governor (*wālī*) of the imam in several regions and a trusted envoy in diplomatic talks (he mentions his appointments as governor in al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 143a). Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr wa-majmaʿ al-buḥūr fī tarājim rijāl al-zaydīya*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raqīb Muṭahhar Muḥammad Ḥajar, 1st ed. (Ṣaʿda: Markaz Ahl al-Bayt li-l-dirāsāt al-islāmīya, 2004), vol. 1, pp. 441–446.

[47] The third volume of the chronicle was summarized by A.S. Tritton. Arthur Stanley Tritton, *The Rise of the Imams of Sanaa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1925). Due to the difficulty of access to manuscript copies of *al-Laʾalī*, many historians relied on this summary of the book. While the summary contains a correct reading of the text, it remains an abridgment of the information preserved in the chronicle.

[48] Ibn Abī al-Rijāl claims that the commentary on *al-Bassāma* by al-Sharafī spanned four volumes (mujallad). Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 4, p. 441. I have not been able to discover a fourth volume.

variety of documentary sources that trickled into the chronicle through citations and mentions. From these remarks the Qasimid imamate appears as a new kind of Zaydi state in which traditional Zaydi practices of governance are combined with Ottoman administrative practices (see chapter 3). Al-Sharafī's history was an optimistic assessment of the young dynasty that saw itself as an heir to the tradition of pre-Ottoman imamates but in fact was an innovative political order.

The Ottoman century and the rise of the Qasimids coincided with structural socio-political change in Yemen. Two types of sources stand witness to these transformations: genealogical works and biographical dictionaries. Genealogies of sayyids in Zaydi Yemen existed before the 'Ottoman century.'[49] The Qasimid period saw the appearance of genealogical works concerned with both sayyid and tribal families. For example, Muḥammad b. imam al-Mutawakkil ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī (d. approx. eleventh century AH / seventeenth century CE), a member of the Āl al-Muʾayyad sayyid family that presented serious claims to the imamate throughout Zaydi history, reflected on the political ambitions of his family in a work including both sayyid and tribal genealogies. His work entitled *Rawḍat al-albāb wa tuḥfat al-aḥbāb wa bughyat al-ṭullāb wa nukhbat al-aḥsāb li-ma'rifat al-ansāb* falls into two parts. One discusses the main sayyid clans of Zaydi Yemen, and the other touches upon tribal history.[50] This work presents a new social order in Yemen in which sayyids and tribes are, on the one hand, distinguished unambiguously and on the other are seen as equally

[49] One of the earliest such genealogies is *al-Mushajjar fī dhikr ansāb al-ʿitra al-ṭāhira bi-diyar al-Yaman* put together by a sayyid, Ṣalāḥ Ibn al-Jallāl (d. 797/1395).
[50] Muḥammad b. imam ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī al-Muʾayyadī, *Rawḍat al-albāb wa tuḥfat al-aḥbāb wa bughyat al-ṭullāb wa nukhbat al-aḥsāb li-ma'rifat al-ansāb,* NF B.7.ar. The tribal survey survives in unique later abridgment, NF F.262.ar. Moreover, the genealogical work includes the legendary genealogy of the Ottoman sultans as descendants of the prophet Noah (Nuḥ), which makes it another example of the hybridization of Ottoman and Zaydi cultures in Yemen in the early modern period. See NF B.7.ar, f. 71b.

important to the history and society of the region. This underlying assumption speaks to the shifts in elite composition that took place in the Qasimid period.

The Qasimid period also witnessed an effort to inscribe scholars in social hierarchies and networks. Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ Ibn Abī Rijāl (d. 1092/1681) systematized the achievements of generations of Zaydi scholars in one dictionary. He was a non-sayyid scholar and served as a qāḍī in the Qasimid imamate. Ibn Abī al-Rijāl saw his own work as a summary of the socio-political importance of scholars in Zaydi Yemen. He remarked that usually the Zaydis overlooked biographies of scholars due to their overwhelming focus on Ahl al-Bayt as the leaders of the community: "they thought that mentioning the leader rather than the followers suffices."[51] This, he wrote, resulted in a rupture (*ikhlāl*) of memory, and a disregard for the achievements of the, one should remark – indispensable, followers. of Ibn Abī al-Rijāl's dictionary points to the rise of a professional class and the formation of its distinct identity, a sign of a changing state in which it was no longer possible to identify its history with the deeds of the imams alone.

While Zaydi sources in Arabic reflect the transformations of the state in the region, Ottoman archival documents speak to changes on another, imperial scale. The corpus of Ottoman documents relevant to the history of Yemen is truly large and this dissertation makes only small incursions into it. Nevertheless, some observations on the character of Ottoman documentation on Yemen can be made (a more detailed discussion can be found in chapter 2). The earliest Ottoman documents concerning Yemen fall into the imperial order category and are preserved in *mühimme* records. As Ottoman rule in the region expanded, the information gathering efforts of the empire

[51] *Kān li-ahl al-bayt min dhalika [*i.e. *tarājim] akthar mimma li-l-fuqahāʾ ... al-zaydiyya iqtaṣarū ʿalā hadhā-l-nawʿ fī dhikr ʿulamāʾihim wa raʾū anna al-ʿināya bi-l-maṭbūʿ tugnī ʿan al-tābiʿ faʾinna ruʾasā al-umma hum duʿā āl Muḥammad ... fa iqtaṣarū ʿalā dhalika.* Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 1, p. 96.

intensified. Several decades of Ottoman rule in Yemen are well-documented in financial registers, indicating an expansion of bureaucracy that employed both local and foreign specialists.[52] This short efflorescence of administrative operation ended as the empire moved to new modes of governance, taxation and information gathering,[53] and once Ottoman rule in Yemen started to retreat (see chapter 2). Ottoman documents from Yemen, thus, provide both evidence of the changing structure of the empire and a snapshot of the local situation in Ottoman Yemen.

Structure and limitations of the dissertation

To answer the research questions set out in this introduction, the dissertation uses a two-pronged approach: first, a chronological analysis of state development (part 1, chapters 1-3) followed by a thematic and chronological analysis of transformations of two groups of the political elite – sayyids and scholars (part 2, chapters 4-5). The first section traces the transformation of the state in Yemen across three chronological chapters. Chapter 1 "The development of the Zaydi imamate under imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn" analyzes the success of the last pre-Ottoman imamate in uniting Yemen and argues that it embodied both the maximum potential of the Zaydi political system and its key weaknesses. Chapter 2, "Ottoman provincial rule in Yemen" demonstrates how the Ottoman Empire developed a unique solution for the problem of Yemen's social, geographical, and religious divisions by incorporating previously disconnected groups into a provincial

[52] The best represented decades are 982-992/1575-85 and 1000-1010/1592-1602.
[53] Shifts in the Ottoman financial administration coincide with the disappearance of Ottoman *maliye* records on Yemen as well. Though Yemen had never undergone a land survey, this process appears linked to the disappearance of the land survey (*taḥrīr*) in the imperial heartlands. Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy. Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire, 1560-1660*; Pál Fodor, *The Business of State: Ottoman Finance Administration and Ruling Elites in Transition (1580s –1615)*, *The Business of State* (De Gruyter, 2018), 236–86.

administration. Chapter 3, "The new imamate of the Qasimid dynasty", investigates the influence of 'the Ottoman century' on the formation of a stable and resilient political system in Qasimid Yemen.

The second section consists of three thematic chapters dedicated to key groups of the Yemeni ruling elite – the descendants of the Prophet (*ashrāf*), the scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) – and examines the effect of 'the Ottoman century' on shifts in their political roles. Chapter 4, "The Zaydi *ashrāf* and state transformations in Yemen", shows how the position of the *ashrāf*, key players in the Yemeni political system and a source of its instability, was undermined through Ottoman interventions. Chapter 5, "The ʿulamāʾ as members of the political elite in Yemen" evaluates how Zaydi scholars became political players in Yemen under Ottoman influence. The conclusion addresses the comparative perspective on Yemen's early modern history thus putting the socio-political developments discussed in the chapters in a broader historical perspective.

The main limitation of the dissertation is that it does not have a separate chapter on tribal leaders (*mashāyikh*), who are instead discussed throughout all chapters either in their relation to state institutions (chapters 1-3) or in relation to the two other elite groups (chapter 4-5). This treatment reflects the character of the sources, already remarked on by Paul Dresch: the texts underlying this dissertation are produced outside of tribal context and as a result do not provide a clear view of shifts within the tribal elite.[54] Additional research on this question remains a desideratum.

Another restriction of this project is that it only briefly discusses the history of the Zaydi imamate prior to the rise of the Sharaf al-Dīns and does not provide an analysis of the long-term trajectory of the Qasimid imamate. A broader chronological scope of the analysis could highlight

[54] In particular, Dresch showed how history-writing in Upper Yemen was monopolized by a distinctly Zaydi and pro-sayyid narrative that marginalizes the tribes. Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen*, 158–97.

the longue-durée shifts of socio-political structures, discussed in this dissertation. However, even the more constrained chronology of the project covers three regimes in the region, their similarities and contrasts, and thus provides a solid foundation for future more expansive research.

Part I. Transformations of the state

Chapter 1. The Sharaf al-Dīn imamate (912-980/1506-72)

The tenth century AH / sixteenth century CE witnessed an unprecedented success of a Zaydi imamate in uniting Yemen. This was the first time in Zaydi history that a state formed by the imams in the northern highlands dominated the entire south-west corner of Arabia. This chapter explores the reasons for the success and the subsequent failure of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate, as well as the legacy of this last pre-Ottoman Yemeni state.

I argue in this chapter that the Zaydi imamate was in no way predestined to succeed in its southward expansion. There was a vision of expansion out of the highlands to the maritime regions, visible from the historical connections of the Zaydis to Jāzān. However, but for the Mamluk raid on the Tahirids that resulted in the destruction of that dynasty, imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's ambitions might have been contained within the region between Ṣanʿāʾ and Ṣaʿda where he would have remained in endless competition with the Āl al-Muʾayyad family.

It was the timely collapse of the Tahirid state and the window of opportunity that the imam got to take over the political arena in the central highlands that turned the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate into the first Zaydi state that controlled most of Yemen. As this chapter shows, the institutions of the imamate, as well as their ideological underpinnings, were not ready for this geographical and socio-political transformation. This failure to fully adapt to new conditions, a crisis of succession, and the Ottoman conquest (discussed in chapter 2) led to the eventual failure of the Sharaf al-Dīn political project.

The unification project was nevertheless an important attempt at local state-building since it was the first time in Yemeni history since pre-Islamic times that a regime that was not an outsider united the region. Previous successes – of the Ayyubids and the Rasulids – were associated with foreign rule. The Sharaf al-Dīns, however, were local state-builders with a characteristically local

political program that distinguished them from the Tahirids, who, even though also of Yemeni origin, positioned themselves as heirs of the Rasulids. This local state-building success set a pattern that after the Ottoman conquest was retraced and improved on by the Qasimid imams.

A geopolitical theory of the Zaydi imamate

The Zaydi imamate of Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn and his son Muṭahhar that is discussed in this chapter presents a unique story of Zaydi success in expanding from the Upper Yemeni to the Lower Yemeni regions and controlling both the highlands and the maritime regions. This southward direction of growth of the Zaydi imamate had been long in the making: already in the times of the first imam al-Hādī ilā-l-ḥaqq Yaḥyā b. Ḥusayn (d. 298/911) the main thrust of Zaydi expansion and the associated resettlement of northern tribes was directed from Ṣaʿda and Najrān towards Ṣanʿāʾ.[1] Al-Hādī, however, did not make it further south; his successors occasionally controlled the Dhamār plain, but Lower Yemen remained outside of Zaydi reach until the Sharaf al-Dīn period.[2] The Ismāʿīlī Ṣulayḥid dynasty (1047-1138), rivals of the Zaydi imams, was able to control for a short while the whole western region, but none prior to the Ayyubids who expanded northwards from the littoral held control of the Tihāma and parts of Ḥaḍramawt in addition to the highlands between 1173 and 1228.[3] The Sharaf al-Dīn success is a particularly interesting moment in Yemeni political history since the direction of state-formation and expansion in Yemen was

[1] Cornelis van Arendonk, *Les débuts de l'imāmat zaidite au Yémen*, trans. Jacques Ryckmans, Publications de la Fondation de Goeje (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960), 127–74.
[2] There are reports of governors appointed by the Zaydi imams to Radāʿ and Dhamār in the fourteenth century. Venetia Porter, "The History and Monuments of the Tahirid Dynasty of the Yemen, 858-923/1454-1517" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Durham, 1992), 16.
[3] Éric Vallet, *L'Arabie marchande: État et commerce sous les sultans rasūlides du Yémen (626-858/1229-1454)*, Bibliothèque historique des pays de l'Islam (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2010), 20–22.

usually oriented northwards. The core of the non-Zaydi states was never further north than Ṣanʿāʾ, a political set-up that can be traced at least to the Abbasid period.[4] What are the reasons for these orientations?

One possible answer to this question would consider economic development. The historical events discussed in this dissertation were often limited to one region of Yemen – the mountains overlooking the Tihāma and their neighboring plateaus, i.e. a single ecological niche.[5] This means that in essence both the Zaydi imamate in the north and the non-Zaydi states of the south relied on agriculture above everything else to support their existence, and the corner of Arabia that they controlled was actually one of the few regions in the peninsula that could sustain them in this way. What distinguished the southern polities is that in addition they had access to maritime trade; such regimes were oriented towards the Red and the Arabian Seas and thus had more surplus to maintain a state apparatus and an army. This in turn allowed them to expand northwards and to wage wars against the Zaydi imams.[6]

State formation in Arabian history in the Islamic period broadly falls into two groups: state genesis generated by hinterlands and state genesis generated in the maritime regions. The perseverance of the highland Zaydi imamate of Yemen and the success of the Sharaf al-Dīn period therefore stand out as an example of hinterland-based state formation, possibly comparable to the rise of the Saudi state. Many Arabian states, however, originate from maritime regions and focus on trade. A lot of this has to do with the specific geographic conditions of Arabia, where a large part of the peninsula, its center, forms a desert landscape. Looking for comparable cases on the

[4] Arendonk, *Les débuts de l'imāmat zaidite au Yémen*, 108. Incidentally, Ṣanʿāʾ was not a capital or seat of government in any consistent way until the 'Ottoman century' discussed in chapter 2.
[5] David Thomas Gochenour, "The Penetration of Zaydi Islam into Early Medieval Yemen" (PhD Dissertation, Harvard, Harvard University, 1984), 4–6.
[6] Vallet, *L'Arabie marchande*, 20–24.

peninsula, one parallel seems to be Oman. Both corners of Arabia have a sharp regional division between the maritime, trade-focused regions and the interior that is more strongly defined by tribalism and traditions of an imamate. The differences between Kharijism and Zaydism aside, the two imamate traditions appear broadly similar in their tribal contexts. However, there are significant differences. A state in the Omani heartland cannot survive without some level of trade,[7] whereas the imamates of the northern highlands in Yemen can exist on their own.

The Zaydi state in Yemen is an example of a socio-political system that fuses a superstructure of religious and dynastic authority and a tribally organized but settled society. Defined in such a way, the state of the Zaydi imams fits an Arabian pattern of state formation visible in Ḥaḍramawt, Jāzān and the Hijaz, regions where sayyids dominated the political sphere, and in Oman where a tribal society welcomed the imamate ideology to form lasting political structures.[8]

As the realization of the idea of ʿAlid rule the Zaydi state could be compared to a handful of other ʿAlid dynasties not based in Arabia – the Zaydi imamates of Northern Iran, the Idrissids of North Africa and, importantly, the sharifian dynasties of Morocco, the Fatimids of Egypt, sayyid dynasties in the Delhi sultanate and fourteenth and fifteenth-century Kilwa. Most of these regimes, however, did not fare well outside of the Arabian context, whereas the Zaydi imams survived until the mid-twentieth century.[9] What is the reason for this divergence? It is possible that we see here

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[7] John Craven Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition of Oman*, Cambridge Middle East Library (Cambridge / New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 5–6, 37–40.

[8] Wilkinson argued that "Arabia never evolved beyond the semi-state structure of the 'chiefdom'". Wilkinson, 36. This is one way to analyze the polities of Arabia, which has its limits as it then implies that there was no local state-building or socio-political transformation. This dissertation argues that at the very least this statement does not apply to Yemen.

[9] An important exception here are the sharifian dynasties of Morocco. It is important to note here that the political legitimation of these dynasties is an innovation of the early modern period, rather than an example of continuity with the early Islamic period when some of the abovementioned sayyid dynasties were founded. On the context of sharifian rule in early modern Morocco see Stephen Cory, "Breaking the Khaldunian Cycle? The Rise of Sharifianism as the Basis for

an example of pre-modern Arabian political projects that derive from specific Arabian socio-religious conditions in which sayyids, descendants of the Prophet, have a powerful place in society and politics.

The formation of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate

Predecessors of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate

The Sharaf al-Dīn imamate came into existence in a time of disarray. After the collapse of the Rasulid dynasty in Lower Yemen, the Tahirid dynasty rose to power. Both dynasties had difficulty controlling Ṣanʿāʾ and had no authority in the regions to the north of the city. The Rasulid and the Tahirid regimes were both oriented southwards and seawards, focused on connecting Lower Yemen, Tihāma and Ḥaḍramawt and appeared to be interested in the Upper Yemen regions only from the perspective of preventing military attacks. This set-up, however, did not bring peace to the northern highlands, and by the turn of the sixteenth century two competing centers of power emerged in the Zaydi domains – Ṣanʿāʾ and Ṣaʿda.

In Ṣanʿāʾ, a dynasty of sayyids from the Banū al-Wazīr family claimed the imamate and ruled the region for about a century (see chapter 4). In the meantime, in Ṣaʿda the Āl al-Muʾayyad claimed authority and acted as an alternative to the Ṣanʿāʾ based Zaydi families. They maintained alliances with the lords of al-Jawf of the Āl al-Ḥamza family, which allowed them to command a formidable force in the northern regions. In the years preceding the ascent of Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, imam al-Hādī ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Muʾayyadī (d. 900/1495) was succeeded by his son imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan and initially this political arrangement was uncontested.[10] However, some powerful

Political Legitimacy in Early Modern Morocco," *The Journal of North African Studies* 13, no. 3 (September 1, 2008): 377–94.

[10] Ibn al-Muʾayyad, *al-Tuḥfa al-ʿanbarīya,* NF D.451.ar, ff. 136a-137b.

members of the Zaydi elite in Ṣaʿda were unhappy with this dynastic tendency. In an ambitious move, qāḍī Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muẓaffar did not recognize the call for the imamate, *daʿwa,* of imam al-Nāṣir and encouraged imam al-Manṣūr billāh Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Wushalī al-Sirājī (*daʿwa* in 900/1495, d. 910/1505), who was a student of al-Hādī ʿIzz al-Dīn and had previously given his oath of allegiance to imam al-Nāṣir, to claim power in Ṣanʿāʾ.[11] Imam al-Sirājī was a convenient figure for the Banū al-Wazīr as well, as he was seen as a neutral candidate since no powerful sayyid family stood behind him.[12] This imam, who was brought to power through intrigue, had a weak support base, and therefore had no other solution to improve his political stance except through military expansion in the Dhamār plain. However, his 905/1500 campaign led to an escalation of the conflict with the Tahirid ruler ʿĀmir b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb. Despite the imam's success in securing the support of the Āl al-Ḥamza in 908/1503, he remained in conflict with the Āl al-Muʾayyad.[13] Moreover, Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, who is described in sources as having an official appointment in imam al-Sirājī's government, seems to have avoided at least some of his responsibilities, in particular, in the year of the Tahirid victory in 910/1505.[14] This left the imam

[11] This plot was additionally supported by the paternal uncle of imam al-Nāṣir, sayyid Ṣalāḥ b. Ḥasan, who bore grudges against his brother's family for displacing him from al-Sharaf. Ibn al-Muʾayyad, *al-Tuḥfa al-ʿanbarīya* NF D.451.ar, f. 136b, 138b. This and similar episodes point to the importance of studying the power balance of Yemeni elites in this period, a task that is addressed in chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation.

[12] He was a descendant of imam al-Dāʿī Sirāj al-Dīn Yaḥya b. Muḥammad (d. 730/1330). For the eponym see *Tatimmat al-ifāda fī tārīkh al-aʾimma al-sāda,* Berlin Glaser 37, ff. 63b-64a. On imam al-Manṣūr billāh see ʿAbd al-Salām b. ʿAbbās al-Wajīh, *Aʿlām al-muʾallifīn al-zaydīya* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-thaqāfīya, 1999), 969–70. *Tatimmat al-ifāda fī tārīkh al-aʾimma al-sāda,* Berlin Glaser 37, ff. 79b-81a.

[13] Amīr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Qāsim al-Bahhāl al-Ḥamzī, known in primary sources as *ṣāḥib Ṣaʿda* and *ṣāḥib Jawf* was one important supporter of imam al-Sirājī. In a gesture of support, he ordered a change in the *khuṭba* in Ṣaʿda to add a mention of this imam. Ibn al-Muʾayyad, *al-Tuḥfa al-ʿanbarīya,* NF D.451.ar, ff. 136b, 139a.

[14] Al-ʿUlufī goes to some length to explain why Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn was not with imam al-Sirājī (and by implication his wife and firstborn son) when Ṣanʿāʾ fell. The biographer claims that he received permission from the imam to leave the city: *ʿazama mawlānā … ʿalā-l-muhājara bi-kull*

with diminished military support, and as a result of Tahirid attacks he was captured and surrendered Ṣanʿāʾ to ʿĀmir b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb.[15] The imam al-Sirājī and his son died in prison; some reports claim that they were poisoned.[16].

After the demise of imam al-Sirājī, the al-Muʾayyad imam saw himself as the only legitimate Zaydi ruler. The Ṣaʿda imams therefore did not recognize imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's call for the imamate, *daʿwa,* and continued to maintain an independent stance. Imam al-Nāṣir even sent a small military detachment to attack Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn when he claimed the imamate in 912/1507.[17] After the death of imam al-Nāṣir in 929/1523, his son imam al-Dāʿī ilā allāh Majd al-Dīn b. Ḥasan (d. 942/1536) called for the imamate.[18] His resistance to Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn was only quelled after the conquest of Ṣaʿda in 940/1534.

This short excursus into Yemeni history at the turn of the sixteenth century demonstrates that imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn pressed his claims to power at a difficult moment. Ṣanʿāʾ, under Zaydi control for most of the fifteenth century, had just been lost and many members of the elite

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mutaʿalliqātihi ʿan Ṣanʿāʾ wa adhina lahu al-imām … fī dhālika. Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn,* NF A.3.ar, f. 92a.

[15] Another consequence of this surrender was the forced relocation of leading Zaydi *ashrāf* families, in particular members of the Banū al-Wazīr. Left without important supporters in his first years in power, imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn was forced to negotiate with the Tahirids for the return of these members of the Zaydi elite. One particular slight to the imam's honor was that his wife and firstborn son had died after they were captured by ʿĀmir b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb in Ṣanʿāʾ. Letter to ʿĀmir b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb is cited in al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām,* NF A.3.ar, ff. 103b-108b.

[16] ʿĪsā Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ fī mā jarā baʿd al-miʾa al-tāsiʿa min al-fitan wa-l-futūḥ*, ed. ʿUbayd ʿAṭīya Ḥasan Yūsuf al-Lahībī, 1st ed., Silsilat al-rasāʾil wa-l-dirāsāt al-jāmiʿīya (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmīya, 1436), 133. al-Wajīh, *Aʿlām al-muʾallifīn al-zaydīya*, 969. *Tatimmat al-iḍāda fī tārīkh al-aʾimma al-sāda,* Berlin Glaser 37*,* f. 80b: *māt … fa-qad qīla annahu bi-l-samm wa qīl ghayr dhālika wa-llāh aʿlam.*

[17] al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn,* NF A.3.ar, ff. 97b-98a.

[18] Ibn al-Muʾayyad, *al-Tuḥfa al-ʿanbarīya* NF D.451.ar f. 137b; al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn,* ZA 561-01, f. 99ab. Al-ʿUlufī predictably claims that the call for the imamate (*daʿwa*) of Majd al-Dīn was considered unlawful even by his supporters and some of them relocated (*hājarū*) to join imam Yaḥyā.

were forcibly removed from it. Ṣaʿda seemed to be on a separate trajectory altogether. The war with the Tahirids resulted in population dislocation and poverty, which meant fewer economic resources for the new imamate. The Tahirid state was becoming stronger, it seemed. It is perhaps a reflection of these complications that the author of one of the biographies, *sīra*s, of the imam claimed that in 912/1506 the notables, *aʿyān,* begged Yaḥyā b. Sharaf al-Dīn to accept the imamate, and he at first rejected it.[19]

Building an imamate from scratch (912-923/1507-1517)

The political project of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn started out in the *hijra* of Ẓafīr in the Ḥajja region, a famous scholarly center that attracted many students already in the days of his grandfather, imam al-Hādī Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Murtaḍā.[20] This choice of location, conditioned by Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's networking strategies (see chapters 4 and 5) and the inaccessibility of Ṣanʿāʾ, was quite symbolic of Yaḥyā's ambition to embody the Zaydi ideal: to present himself as a just ruler and a scholar, recognized by the leading authorities of his time. In this logic, the *sīra*s of the imam stress that his call was supported and encouraged by the scholars of Zaydi Yemen.[21] According to these sources, the initial pledge of allegiance took place in a setting intended to remind the onlookers of the way the *ṣaḥāba* pledged their allegiance to the Prophet; the imam sat

[19] Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal, *Al-Sulūk al-dhahabīya fī khulāṣat al-sīra al-mutawakkilīya*, ed. Zayd b. ʿAlī al-Fuḍayl, 1st ed. (Jidda: Maṭbaʿat al-mafāhīm li-l-ṭibāʿa wa-l-taṣāmīm, 2012), 96.

[20] Ibrāhīm Aḥmad al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam al-buldān wa-l-qabāʾil al-yamanīya* (Ṣanʿāʾ / Beirut: Dār al-kalima li-l-ṭibāʿa wa-l-nashr wa-l-tawzīʿ / al-Muʾassasa al-jāmiʿīya li-l-dirāsāt wa-l-nashr wa-l-tawzīʿ, 2002), 975–76; Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal, *Al-Sulūk al-dhahabīya*, 96.

[21] Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal, *Al-Sulūk al-dhahabīya*, 96. Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal wrote that the imam was encouraged by *aʿyān* to claim the imamate. While he did not clarify who they were, by remarking that they were "the ones with whom the word of agreement concludes" (*man tatimm bihim kalimat al-ijmāʾ*), he most probably alluded to scholars of sayyid and non-sayyid descent. This also confirmed by the study of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's network, presented in chapter 5.

under a tree next to the prayer house built by his grandfather imam al-Mahdī Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā and received people's expressions of allegiance.[22] This symbolism was not lost on the participants.

The immediate tasks of Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn as imam were two: to help those sayyids who were forcibly relocated by the Tahirids to return home, and to overcome the resistance of the Āl al-Muʾayyad. Of these two tasks, the imam chose to deal with the Āl al-Muʾayyad first, as they presented a more direct threat to his claims to legitimacy. To this end, shortly after his *daʿwa* he set out on a tour (*makhraj*) of the northern highlands. This tour had several goals – networking to expand his supporter base among local elites (sayyids, scholars and tribal shaykhs) and the general population, assessment of military potential, and tax collection. Travels for these purposes in later periods are referred to in Yemeni Zaydi sources as *ṭiyāfa;* they became a recurring practice of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate, even though in later years it was not the imam who toured but his deputies, as will be shown below.

Imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's first tour, which continued with some breaks from 912/1507 to 914/1508, is described in considerable detail by his first biographer al-ʿUlufī.[23] The first year of travels was predominantly focused on the region of Ḥajja and the mountain regions (and their forts) overlooking the plain of Ṣanʿāʾ. His first destination two months after the "pledge of the tree" (*bayʿat al-shajara*) was wādī Sharis. Wādī Sharis connects to wādī Mawr that the imam

[22] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, f. 97b; Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal, 96–97, f. 5. The reference at heart is to the *bayʿat al-riḍwān* that the companions of the Prophet gave to him during the Ḥudaybīya events. The event took place under a tree, hence the alternative appellation. W. Montgomery Watt, "Bayʿat Al-Riḍwān," in *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2012. Another reference could have been the *bayʿa* of the people of Najrān to imam al-Hādī ilā-l-ḥaqq in 284 / 897. Arendonk, *Les débuts de l'imāmat zaidite au Yémen*, 140.
[23] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, ff. 99b-102b.

visited the following year and the regions of Maswar and Kuḥlān ʿAffār.[24] In this location, he established relations with the local tribes whom his biographer describes as belonging to Qudam. Members of the Qudam confederation were important allies of the imam as this large tribe controlled most of Ḥajja in that period; [25] and for this reason, Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn returned there again in 914/1508. The imam also used this moment to conclude a marriage with Amīna bint al-Sulṭān Ṭuhayf, the daughter of the local tribal shaykh, who was based in Bayt Rayb, a fort in Maswar.[26] The banū al-Ṭuhayf did not belong to the Qudam, instead they had connections with the ʿAbs confederation that was present in the Tihāma region, and the Banū al-ʿAbbās.[27] Members of banū al-Ṭuhayf had good relations with the Tahirids, one of the shaykhs even holding the position of wālī of fort Mudaʿ.[28]

Two other important geographical regions that the imam visited twice in the span of one year were wādī Lāʿa and Jabal Tays.[29] In these regions the imam was busy establishing connections with local elites and gaining a hold of the local fortifications. To this end he met a delegation of scholars from the *hijra* of ʿIrr Thawmān in Dhahbān Banī Yawb and then spent the months of Shaʿbān and Ramaḍān (January and February) in the *hijra*.[30] The point of these visits was to

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[24] al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 1, pp. 858–59. Presently the wādī mostly produces coffee, however, it is unclear whether that was the case in imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's time.
[25] al-Maqḥafī, vol. 2, p. 1254.
[26] al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, ff. 75a, 101a.
[27] al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 72b; al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 2, pp. 1009, 1543.
[28] al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, ff. 72b, 115ab; Mudaʿ was one of the forts of Maṣāniʿ Ḥimyar, a region that connects Ṣanʿāʾ and Ḥajja.
[29] Jabal Tays in modern Yemen is known as Jabal Banī Ḥabish; both Jabal Tays and wādī Lāʿa form parts of the region al-Ṭawīla, neighboring Maswar al-Muntāb and are known in modern Yemen for their coffee production. Whether coffee was grown in these regions in the period of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn is not clear. al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 1, pp. 247; 2, 1363.
[30.] ʿIrr Thawmān is a *hijra* located in the mountains west of Ṣanʿāʾ. Its foundation is traced back to the tenth century. al-Maqḥafī, vol. 2, pp. 1034–35; Ismāʿīl b. ʿAlī al-Akwaʿ, *Hijar al-ʿilm wa-maʿāqiluhu fī-l-Yaman* (Beirut, Damascus: Dār al-fikr al-muʿāṣir / Dār al-Fikr, 1416), 1399. Dhahbān Banī Yawb seems to be identifiable with fort Dhahbān in modern Rujum (Maḥwīt

convince the scholars of ʿIrr Thawmān, who were known supporters of the Āl al-Muʾayyad, to shift their allegiances.[31] The imam held debates with them, in which he proved his status as sayyid-scholar qualifying for the imamate.[32] The recognition of the imam by the scholars was concluded with a teaching session.[33] He spent another important religious occasion, the *ʿīd al-fiṭr* of 912/ February 1507, in Ḥawra, a location known for its market (*sūq*) and hence a crossroads in the Ḥajja region.[34] As a result, this part of the campaign of the imam was quite successful and his goal of gaining new supporters against the Āl al-Muʾayyad was achieved.

In this early period, we can also observe the first occasions on which the imam delegated governing tasks to trusted officials. Specifically, he sent his brother ʿAlī b. Shams al-Dīn to al-Ḥayma, a region to the west of Ṣanʿāʾ, after receiving a delegation (*wafd*) led by faqīh Dāwūd b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥaymī al-Ḥaṣubānī, lord (*ṣāḥib*) of ʿIrr Banī al-Aʿḍab, with the instruction to collect taxes.[35] As will be demonstrated below, the imam relied on such delegations that usually included two officials – one sayyid, often a member of the imam's family, and a scholar, or a tribal shaykh

governorate). Alternatively it could be associated with Bayt Yawb, which according to Maqḥafī, is a village in Lāʿa. al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 1, pp. 653; 2, pp. 1929–30.

[31] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, f. 101a. Among the scholars whom the imam met were the brothers faqihs Muḥammad b. Dāwūd b. Aḥmad al-Ḥayyī and ʿAlī b. Dāwūd b. Aḥmad al-Ḥayyī, known supporters of the Āl al-Muʾayyad; they were married to the daughters of sayyid Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm, a notable scholar from ʿIrr Thawmān who was a student and supporter of imam ʿIzz al-Dīn b. al-Ḥasan. Muḥammad b. Dāwud was a close advisor of imam ʿIzz al-Dīn b. al-Ḥasan. Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr wa-majmaʿ al-buḥūr fī tarājim rijāl al-zaydīya*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raqīb Muṭahhar Muḥammad Ḥajar, 1st ed. (Ṣaʿda: Markaz Ahl al-Bayt li-l-dirāsāt al-islāmīya, 2004), vol. 4, p. 298; Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, vol. 3, pp. 238–39.

[32.] Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal, *Al-Sulūk al-dhahabīya*, 100.

[33] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, f. 101b.

[34] Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 102a; al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, ff. 173b, 181a.

[35.] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, f. 101b. ʿIrr Banī al-Aʿḍab is located at the peak of mount ʿIrr that overlooks Ṣanʿāʾ and connects to the highest mountain of Yemen, Jabal al-Nabī Shuʿayb. al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 2, pp. 1034–35.

and a scholar – to administer locations that were too far for the imam to travel to in person for extended periods.

His 912-913/1506-1507 travels helped imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn build the core of his imamate; the territories that he visited in this year – Lāʿa, Ḥajja, Jabal Tays – and the tribes that he established connections with remained in the Sharaf al-Dīn orbit long after his death. The strength of the connection between the imam's family and the tribes of this region became visible during the seventeenth century, when the Qasimid imams spent several years trying to get hold of these territories (see chapter 3). As a result of building up this strong core, in 914/1508 the imam was able to expand his territorial ambitions in several directions – westwards to the al-Sharaf mountain range via wādī Mawr, in the northern direction, especially towards the mountain range of al-Ahnūm.[36] In 914/1508 he also had his first military victories when he captured several forts in al-Ṭaraf, among them al-Qafl and ʿIzzān.

In all these locations the strategy of the imam to acquire new supporters included two components that can be broadly described as (1) networking with local elites and (2) the systematization of tax collection and redistribution of resources. Networking with local elites, which took the shape of marriage alliances and study sessions, will be discussed in greater detail in chapters 4 and 5. The stabilization of the economy was the strategy that was intended to allow the imam to connect to the common people in these regions. It seems that in every location that he reached his first concern was to check on the state of the local treasury and granary, *bayt al-māl,* and to check on the distribution of provisions from it to the poor and the scholars. It is probably for this reason – alongside the opportunity to achieve greater visibility – that the imam visited local markets (*sūq*)

[36] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, f. 102a.

in Ḥajja and al-Ahnūm.[37] Taken together these policies were seen by some – if not all – members of the elite as a confirmation and guarantee of the imam's legitimacy.[38]

Zaydi sources on the Sharaf al-Dīn period provide little information on what happened between the first two years after the *daʿwa* and the Mamluk conquest of Yemen in 921/1515. The biographers of the imam al-ʿUlufī and Ibn Mufaḍḍal skip the ten years that separate the territorial expansion described here from future events, and the chronicler ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh shifts his narrative to focus on events in Lower Yemen. He is the only source that reports some of the victories that the Tahirids scored against the imam in 917/1511, when they captured the forts of Thulā, Kawkabān and Ḥuḍūr al-Shaykh, all overlooking the plain surrounding Ṣanʿaʾ and hence strategically important.[39] It seems that in this decade the imam remained in a stalemate against the Tahirids, who succeeded at attracting increasing support from the urban elites in Ṣanʿāʾ and Ṣaʿda.[40] The Mamluk invasion of Yemen drastically changed this status quo.

The benefits of the Mamluk invasion of Yemen (921-923/1515-1517)

The Age of Exploration had its own repercussions in Yemen. Interestingly, it was not an attack from the Portuguese, who expanded into the Indian Ocean in this period, [41] but that of

[37] In 914/1509 the imam passed through the market Sūq al-Majmaʿ in Ḥārat Jabal al-Ahnūm al-Gharbīya. Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar, f. 102b.
[38] This strategy of the imam was lauded by a reader of his *sīra* who remarked that only such a leader who ensured the provision of the poor and the scholars from the *buyūt al-amwāl* deserved to be followed: *kān al-imām ʿalayhi al-salām yunfiq akthar buyūt al-amwāl fī-l-fuqarāʾ wa-l-masākīn wa-l-ʿulamāʾ wa-l-mutaʿallimīn … fa-man faʿala dhālika fa-lā ḥaraj ʿalayhi wa-man manaʿ dhālika kān al-ḥaraj ʿalayhi.* Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 102a (marginal note, possibly by ʿAbdallāh b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn).
[39] ʿĪsā Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ fī mā ḥadatha baʿd al-miʾa al-tāsiʿa min al-fitan wa-l-futūḥ*, ed. Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad al-Maqḥafī (Ṣanʿāʾ: Markaz ʿAbbādī li-l-dirāsāt wa-l-nashr, 1424), 26–27.
[40] Ibn Luṭfallāh, 30.
[41] The subject of Portuguese expansion in the region and the reaction of Muslim powers to it has received significant attention from scholars. See, for example, Salih Özbaran, "A Turkish Report

another Muslim state, Mamluk Egypt, that changed the balance of power in Yemen, bringing an end to Ṭahirid dominance and allowing imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn to consolidate his power. The Mamluk dispatch of an expedition to Yemen, despite previously amicable relations between Mamluk Egypt and the Tahirids,[42] was a result of two factors – the need of the Mamluk expeditionary force for provisions that the Tahirids were denying them, and the friendly communication of those in opposition to the Tahirids with the Mamluks.[43] Zaydi sources claim that a letter from imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn to amīr Ḥusayn al-Kurdī, the leader of the Mamluk expedition to Kamarān, calling him to support the sayyids of Yemen against Tahirid tyranny provided the *casus belli.*[44] In fact there were several delegations, in addition to the Zaydi one, from Jāzān and Luḥayya, that cumulatively indicated to the Mamluks that the Tahirids' support base was eroding. [45]

The Mamluk conquest of Yemen was swift, aided by their firearms and local support, and strongly resembled a raid for plunder.[46] The Mamluk corps divided to combine the campaign against the Tahirids with an attack on Aden, and they therefore had no capacity to establish their

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on the Red Sea and the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean (1525)," *Arabian Studies* 4 (1978): 81–88; Jacques Bacqué-Grammont and Anne Krœll, *Mamlouks, ottomans et portugais en Mer Rouge. L'affaire de Djedda en 1517*, Supplement aux annales islamologiques (Cairo: Institut Français d'archéologie orientale, 1988); Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (Oxford / New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010); Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "A View from Mecca: Notes on Gujarat, the Red Sea, and the Ottomans, 1517–39/923–946 H.," *Modern Asian Studies* 51, no. 02 (March 2017): 268–318, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X16000172.

[42] Between 895/1490 and 902/1497 there were two Mamluk embassies to Tahirid Yemen. Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 1424, 25, 30; Porter, "The History and Monuments of the Tahirid Dynasty," 92.

[43] Porter, "The History and Monuments of the Tahirid Dynasty," 121–25.

[44] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 1424, 31–34.

[45] The last years of the Tahirids in Yemen were plagued by revolts in the Tihāma, Shiḥr and other regions. Porter, "The History and Monuments of the Tahirid Dynasty," 84–93, 95, 117–18. ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh reports that there was some disagreement among the Mamluks on whether it was practical to attack the Tahirids. Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 1424, 34.

[46] Porter, "The History and Monuments of the Tahirid Dynasty," 126–28.

own rule in Yemen. In addition, while their forces were overthrowing the Tahirids in Yemen,[47] the Mamluks in Egypt were being overrun by the Ottomans. The Mamluk corps in Yemen, hearing about the event, shifted to showing allegiance to the Ottoman sultan,[48] but no one was to be fooled – the Ottomans would not be providing any support or resources to the Mamluks. Thus, the Zaydi imamate had a unique chance to fill the power vacuum that was created by the fall of the Lower Yemeni dynasty.

As a first step, imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn recaptured the forts overlooking the Ṣanʿāʾ plain; his first victory was at Thulā (in 923/1517).[49] The imam was still in a precarious position, so he then switched from direct military action to diplomacy. Shortly after the conquest of Thulā he reached out to the notables of Dhamār inviting them to visit him, he then sent a delegation of his representatives there.[50] Then he simply waited for the angered people of Ṣanʿāʾ to revolt against the Mamluks who were left behind and came to the city only after the political scene was cleared for him in shawwāl 923 / October 1517.[51]

A description of the events in al-ʿUlufī shows that the imam had little military force to command at the time. Among his immediate enemies were, in addition to the Mamluks, the Āl al-Ḥamza who sent additional forces from al-Jawf to join the Mamluks. The imam defended the city against several attacks to prevent them from joining forces with the Mamluks who were still locked in the Ghumdān castle. Al-ʿUlufī insists that the first battle was won by the imam, but somehow at the end of it he found himself signing an agreement (*ittifāq*) with the Āl al-Ḥamza that confirmed

[47] And even this mission was not fully complete; in 930/1524, al-ʿUlufī reports, several members of the Tahirid family were still fighting each other in the vicinity of Radāʿ. Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar, f. 252b.
[48] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 1436, 190.
[49] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar, f. 116a.
[50] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar, ff. 116ab.
[51] Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, ff. 118b-119b.

their rule over "half the country" and resulted in the release of the Mamluks from the fort.[52] Suspiciously, another battle followed the first and it seems that only the support of the newly acquired Dhamār allies allowed the imam to overcome the Āl al-Ḥamza in it.[53] The expulsion of the Mamluks also took much longer than al-ʿUlufī claims and in the end they left with all of their loot, which is hard to interpret as a complete victory for the imam.[54] Nevertheless, in the years 923-924/1517-1518 the imam was able to gain a foothold in Ṣanʿāʾ and to bring Dhamār into his orbit. In this way the balance shift precipitated by the Mamluk raid allowed the imam to set the stage for the territorial expansion of the imamate that continued over the next two decades.

Territorial expansion (925-940/1519-1534)

In the years following the capture of Ṣanʿāʾ, the imam continued building a coalition, firstly, against the remaining Mamluks and the Tahirids to facilitate his southward expansion, secondly, against the Āl al-Muʾayyad and Āl al-Ḥamza to secure the northern regions, and, lastly, against the Ismāʿīlīs in the west. To succeed in this expansion, the imam built up a network of supporters that revolved around his son Muṭahhar, tribal groups such as the Madḥij confederation, sayyids from lesser branches of the Āl al-Muʾayyad and Āl al-Ḥamza, as well as sayyids of the Tihāmah. Through these connections the imam was able to enforce control over the Dhamār Plain, and eventually expand beyond it. [55]

[52] Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, ff. 119b-120a.
[53] Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, ff. 121a, 123a-124b.
[54] Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 133b.
[55] On the supporters of the Tahirids among the Banū Ḥubaysh and Baʿdān see Porter, "The History and Monuments of the Tahirid Dynasty," 90–91. The banū Ḥubaysh and the residents of Baʿdān are listed among the regions that in 936/1530 recognized the authority of imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn without military conquest (*al-bilād allatī lam takun qad malakahā al-imām … yawmaʾidh illā bi-ṭāʿat ahlihā*). Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn*, vol. 2, ZA 561-01, f. 174b, Porter, 38.

In 925/1519 the imam, feeling that Ṣanʿāʾ was secure under his control, went in person on a campaign to capture fort Mudaʿ north-west of Thulā. This fort stood at the axis of Sharaf al-Dīn and Āl al-Muʾayyad interests. The imam covered the short distance that separates Ṣanʿāʾ from the fort (c. 42 miles) in five days, according to al-ʿUlufī. This disparity between distance and time is easily explained if we consider the stops that the imam made on his way: he travelled through the lands of the banū Ḥajjāj, his relatives through marriage, and banū Maymūn, a tribal group residing to the north of Thulā.[56] The goal of these stops was to assemble an army, but even though it already included musketeers, the siege of Mudaʿ resulted in a lengthy affair that continued until ramaḍān 933 / June 1527.[57] With the surrender of Mudaʿ the imam was finally on track to establish his control over the regions between Ṣanʿāʾ and Ṣaʿda.

Between 925/1519 and 933/1527 the imam traveled to expand his influence in the Ḥajja region, and worked to secure additional forts in the mountains overlooking the Ṣanʿāʾ plain.[58] The control of the imam over these territories, however, was rather loose, and every year a military force was sent to the regions that were nominally considered already under the imam's control.[59] These yearly expeditions that combined administrative affairs such as tax collection with a military component became a training ground for the eldest son of the imam, Muṭahhar, who between 925/1519 and 933/1527 rose through the ranks as one of the imam's most gifted generals. In 924/1518, when he was still a young adult (*fī awāʾil al-taklīf*) he was sent on his first mission to

[56] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar, f. 154b; al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 2, pp. 1698–99.
[57] The fort was surrendered to the son of the imam Muṭahhar. Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Muta-wakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar, f. 286b.
[58] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 1424, 58. In 924/1518 Kawkabān was captured, in 926/1520 – Dhimarmar, a fort overlooking the Ṣanʿāʾ plain from the eastern side. In the same years the imam was besieging Kuḥlān Tāj al-Dīn.
[59] Ibn Luṭfallāh, 60, 62, 63.

Dhamār.[60] After he reached full adulthood the next year when he was married to the daughter of amīr ʿAbdallāh b. Idrīs al-Siḥāb al-Ḥamzī,[61] he was made responsible for military campaigns and tax collection operations in Jabal Tays (muḥarram – rabīʿ al-awwal 926 / January – March 1520), Mudaʿ (927/1521, 928/1522), ʿAmrān (928/1523), al-Bawn (928-929/1523-24), Ḥuḍūr al-Maṣāniʿ (931/1525), and operations against Hamdān and the Ismāʿīlīs (929/1524).[62] He built up the military force of the imam, in particular from the al-Madhḥij confederation[63] residing in the regions surrounding Dhamār that Muṭahhar visited often.[64] It is perhaps in this period the Muṭahhar started to form ideas of a new type of leadership for Zaydi Yemen (see discussion below).

In the process of territorial expansion imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn had to find ways to integrate the various sayyids families that resided in the conquered regions. The imam chose a policy of appeasement and coalition-building. Having received their oaths of allegiance he signed agreements with them that guaranteed their residence in locations that they previously had under control.[65] For example, the Āl al-Manṣūr, a subgroup of the Āl al-Ḥamza, were guaranteed ʿAmrān

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[60] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar, f. 140b.
[61] Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 156b. Another woman of this family of sayyids was married to the imam; the family are known to al-ʿUlufī as supporters of imam al-Manṣūr ʿAbdallāh b. Ḥamza; they seem to be a branch of the larger Āl al-Ḥamza with whom the imam was able to maintain warm relations. Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 75a.
[62] Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, ff. 181b-185a, 221ab, 232b, 234a, 238a, 245b-246a.
[63] A description of his army in 928/1522 lists the following tribes classified as belonging to Madhḥij*: qabāʾil Madhḥij ka-banī Qays, banī Wuhayb, ahl al-ʿArsh, ʿAns, Zubayd, ʿUbayda wa ghayrihim min banī Shihāb wa-banī Bahlūl wa-Shayḥān wa-Khawlān wa-banī al-Ḥārith*. al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 237b.
[64] Muṭahhar seems to have held the position of governor of Dhamār. In 929/1523 the goal of his visit was to observe and assess the affairs of the region "area by area and tribe by tribe" *(baladan baladan wa qabīlatan qabīlatan).* Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 238b. His policy clearly paid off when he arrived at Ṣanʿāʾ with the army he assembled in Dhamār and produced a great impression on those *ashrāf* who were still harboring ideas of defiance against the imam. Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 242a.
[65] In al-ʿUlufī the physical copies of such agreements are called *musawaddāt,* as in, for example, his remark on the peace (*ṣulḥ*) with Āl Manṣūr: *ruqima fī-l-musawaddāt.* Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 242b.

(northwest of Ṣanʿāʾ) and al-Bawn in 929/1523.[66] This subgroup included the influential al-Shawīʿ family that controlled the tribes of al-Jawf and due to this continued to play an important role in the Ottoman period (see chapter 2). The first months of the alliance were shaky and a major tribal shaykh even turned to the Tahirids with some support from the al-Shawīʿ clan.[67] The imam was eventually able to strike a deal with this group of sayyids, which indicates his diplomatic skills; with this alliance in hand, he was paving the way for a future conquest of Ṣaʿda.

Another major turn for the imam was the death of the Āl al-Muʾayyad imam Ḥasan b. al-imām ʿIzz al-Dīn in 929/1523.[68] After his death Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn was able to pull to his side the Mirghim family who were important allies both geographically as they controlled wādī al-Sirr north of Ṣanʿāʾ and socially as they were a family of scholars with links to many influential sayyids and scholars in Ṣaʿda (see chapter 5 for more details on this family).[69] They joined imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn due to doubts surrounding the qualifications of the son of the deceased imam, Majd al-Dīn, who claimed the imamate immediately after his father's death.[70] Additionally, a former wazīr of the Āl al-Muʾayyad travelled from Ṣaʿda to Ṣanʿāʾ and after a disputation with Yaḥyā

[66] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 1424, 62, 64. Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 242a.
[67] Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, ff. 247b-248a.
[68] *Tatimmat al-ifāda fī tārīkh al-aʾimma al-sāda,* Berlin Glaser 37, f. 84a.
[69] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar, f. 249b. As a bargaining chip, the imam promised them that they would have full control (*wilāya tāmma*) in regions as varied as Lāʿa, wādī al-Sirr, Maswar and bilād al-Hān. In effect, it seems he meant to include them in the government of these regions.
[70] This is, at least, the position expressed in sources produced in the Sharaf al-Dīn circle that expressed the opinion that he called for the imamate "without respect and attention to his duties" (*min ghayr naẓar wa lā iltifāt ilā mā yajib ʿalayhi*). Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 2, ZA 561-01, f. 99a. The history of the Āl al-Muʾayyad lacks a discussion of Majd al-Dīn's rule and only mentions him among the children of his father, which might be another indication that he was not a popular figure. Ibn al-Muʾayyad, *al-Tuḥfa al-ʿanbarīya,* NF D.451.ar, f. 137b.

Sharaf al-Dīn concluded that he was the true leader of the Zaydi community.[71] These events amounted to an important ideological victory for imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn that translated into expansion to Ṣaʿda ten years later.

Another front of Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's activities concerned his dealings with the Ismāʿīlīs. This was a necessary geopolitical move as the imam was expanding his presence in Ḥajja which directly bordered on regions, such as Ḥayma and the Ḥarāz mountains, that were under Ismāʿīlī control. Already in 925/1519, the imam announced the start of a campaign against them.[72] The expansion of the imamate was facilitated by Ismāʿīlī infighting,[73] and the treaty of 929/1523, a ten-year-long peace agreement, concluded with the imam stripping the Ismāʿīlīs of their forts in regions closest to Ṣanʿāʾ.[74] The imam had little regard for the treaty, however, and resumed military action against the Ismāʿīlīs in ramaḍān 930/ July 1524, when he called to his supporters to resume war (*jihād*) against the Ismāʿīlīs. This call to arms also served another important goal – it included a range of territories that were not yet directly under the imam's control, such as Ṣaʿda,[75] and through this call to collective action normalized the idea of Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's sovereignty. The target of his expedition that started out from Bayt Ghufr, a locality north-west of Ṣanʿāʾ, was the area where the Marhiba tribal confederation, supporters of the Ismāʿīlīs, resided.[76] Under the guise of an ideological fight, the imam was extending his control over forts in the plain surrounding

[71] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar, f. 251a. This scholar went on to become a *khaṭīb* in Ṣaʿda and is known to have composed poetry in honor of the imam in 936/1530. Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn*, vol. 2, ZA 561-01 ff. 136ab.
[72] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar, f. 153ab.
[73] Samer Traboulsi, "Sources for the History of the Ṭayyibī Ismāʿīlī Daʿwa in Yemen and Its Relocation to India," *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts*, no. 5 (2014): 246–74.
[74] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar, f. 246b-247a; Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 1424, 64.
[75] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar, f. 252b.
[76] Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, ff. 252b-255a.

Ṣanʿāʾ (Fidda and al-Munaqqab in particular) and in the wādī Ḍahr located to the west of the city. As a result of this new assault, the Ismāʿīlī leaders surrendered the forts and were forced to agree to relocation to Ḥarāz.[77] The next year the imam was already launching an attack on them there.[78]

The successful expansion of 925-930/1519-1524 and political stabilization put the imam in a position to extend his geopolitical interests beyond the highlands. In 931/1525 he took an interest in the affairs of al-Shiḥr and inquired into the situation there; he tried to establish diplomatic relations by sending the local ruler a letter and gifts.[79] His interest was related to trade. As the imamate was gaining control of the highlands it was increasingly running into adversity in interactions with the Tahirids, who still controlled Aden. In 932/1526, the local Tahirid ruler ʿAbd al-Malik b. Muḥammad stopped a caravan from Ṣanʿāʾ that consisted of forty camels with loads of silk (*bazz*); he confiscated both the camels and the silk, bringing them to Miqrāna.[80] This and similar unrecorded events must have spurred the desire of the imam to find a new maritime partner. Al-Shiḥr with its port al-Mukallā was one such option, despite the detour. Unfortunately, I have not yet found information on the outcome of these negotiations.

Another direction to look towards was the Tihāma with its connections to the Red Sea trade. As the success of Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn became known in the Tihāma, the sayyids of al-Mikhlāf al-Sulaymānī sent diplomatic missions to the court of the imam in Thulā, probably seeing an alliance that would protect them against the ambitions of the sharīfs of Mecca. One such mission occurred in 936/1520. It was headed by a sayyid from the region who brought poems to the imam – some composed by himself, some by the father and son, the faqīhs Abū-l-Qāsim and Muḥammad

[77] Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 268a.
[78] Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, ff. 274ab; he appointed sayyid Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Rīyānī to lead the military force against them.
[79] Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, ff. 268ab.
[80] Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 281b.

b. Abī-l-Qāsim al-Yaʿ/ghmān.[81] The only component of the mission that was recorded by contemporaries was that these poems were recited (*unshida*) in the presence of the imam and the messenger was rewarded with two horses and a mule, as well as robes of honor (*khilaʿ*) and money gifts.[82] The author of the *sīra* does not construe this as a conquest of the region or as a confirmation of its incorporation into the imamate. To him, the diplomatic mission provided a promotional opportunity for the imam, news of whose generosity was spread (or was expected to be spread) by the messenger. This description of the reception indicates that the ambitions of Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn in this period were focused on establishing relations and assuming a mode of co-existence rather than conquest and subjugation. In effect, his administration was already over-stretched, and he didn't have the institutional capacity to incorporate the Tihāma.

The territorial expansion slowed down during the devastating plague of 933/1527 that reduced the support group of Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn. Nevertheless, in 934/1528 his son Muṭahhar resumed the assault on Tahirid territories and captured their capitals Miqrāna and Radāʿ.[83] By 936/1530 members of the court of the imam shared the impression that he was the only truly powerful ruler in Yemen. This was in particular depicted in a day-by-day chronicle of the events of his rule by al-ʿUlufī.[84] By then, the Ṣaʿda-based Āl al-Muʾayyad were open to negotiations.[85] The slow but steady movement of the imamate in the northern direction concluded in 940/1534 when Ṣaʿda surrendered to the imam, an event that was seen as a watershed by contemporaries and that

[81] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn*, vol. 2, ZA 561-01, ff. 18b, 21a, 26a.
[82] One witness claimed that the sum was 10,000 *dīnār*s. Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, f. 26a.
[83] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 1424, 76–77.
[84] The chronicle-*sīra* in question is preserved in a unique manuscript digitized by the Imam Zayd b. ʿAlī Cultural Foundation, ZA 561-01. This is a preliminary identification of the author of this chronicle – *sīra,* based on remarks in the already identified *sīra* of al-ʿUlufī that refer to events that took place in 936/1530 (see NF A.3.ar, f. 271b).
[85] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn*, vol. 2, ZA 561-01, ff. 96b-97a.

was recorded in a dedicated chronicle-*sīra* by al-Zurayqī.[86] After this, Muṭahhar attempted to capture Aden from the Tahirids, and another son of the imam led a campaign in Najrān. But by 945/1538 the time of the imamate started to run out under the pressure of internal conflict – the succession issue discussed below – and a new external intervention, the start of the Ottoman conquest.

These victories signaled a qualitative change in the character of the Zaydi imamate. As a result of his territorial expansion, imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn became the first Zaydi imam to control large areas in both Upper and Lower Yemen. As I will show in the next section of the chapter, in response to this geopolitical transformation his initially small, personally controlled administration had to expand to include more specialists to fulfill some of the imam's functions. The qualitative change also made the question of succession more acute: the imam seriously considered a dynastic transmission of power and sought ways to negotiate this with Zaydi expectations for imams. The resulting decisions of the imam led to a fateful conflict with his eldest son Muṭahhar and to a split in the political structure of the imamate.[87]

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[86] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 80b-81a; al-Zurayqī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn,* ZA 238-03, p. 46: "I wanted what I collected to be a sort of addendum to what came before and wanted it to start with the year … that is the year in which the imam, may God help him with His aid, conquered the town of Ṣaʿda, protected by God, and other northern lands and I started to write this in the month rabīʿ of the aforementioned year". (*wa-kuntu aradtu an yakūn mā jamaʿtuhu min dhālika ka-l-tatimma li-mā qablahu wa yakūn ibtidāʾuhu min awwal ʿām … wa-huwa al-ʿām alladhī fataḥa fīhi al-imām ayyadahu allāh bi-naṣrihi madīnat Ṣaʿda al-maḥrūsa bi-llāh taʿālā wa-sāʾir al-bilād al-shāmīya wa sharaʿtu fī raqm dhālika fī shahr rabīʿ al-[…] min al-sana al-madhkūra*.) ZA 238-03 resembles a draft or a collection of notes for a final text, which is possibly, al-Zurayqī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn,* ÖNB Glaser 39, a *sīra* of the imam that starts with the events of 938/1532. https://digital.onb.ac.at/RepViewer/viewer.faces?doc=DTL_8685495&order=1&view=SINGLE (Accessed July 6, 2021)

[87] Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF D.545.ar, ff. 31ab (copy of the document naming his son ʿAlī the heir).

The shape of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate

On the surface of things, the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate appears similar to the imamate of his predecessors all the way back to the founder of the Zaydi imamate in Yemen, imam al-Hādī ilā-l-ḥaqq. The origins of the political institutions that will be covered in this section can be traced back to the third century AH/ ninth century CE. The Sharaf al-Dīn imamate nevertheless underwent a significant transformation vis-à-vis the 'classical' model of the Zaydi imamate. The main reason for this transformation was that the imam had to rule a larger territory with a more diverse population and had to negotiate relations of trust with more local stakeholders than any of his predecessors. To this end, Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn introduced several innovations – conferring more power on his representatives, be they members of his family like his sons Muṭahhar and Shams al-Dīn, other sayyids, members of the scholarly class or members of the tribal elites; delegation of revenue collection, auditing, and redistribution to administrators; rotation of governors and regular audits of their activity; a professional army in combination with a tribal militia. These innovations resulted in a shift in the political role of the imam – increasingly he became a distant figure that only signed off on documents and provided written and oral guarantees of order, a source of just rule but not a direct practitioner. This created a tension with the traditional vision of the role of the imam in a Zaydi polity.

In attempting a description of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate, the historian is luckily supported by an extensive change in Zaydi history writing that fully reflects the transformations of the Zaydi state under imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's rule. This imam became one of only two Zaydi imams who had more than one *sīra* composed about them.[88] Contemporary Zaydi sources mention that imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn had three *sīras* written about him during his lifetime, and one source

[88] Based on our current knowledge of surviving *sīras* of Zaydi imams.

claims that his biography (what is intended is probably, the combined biographies of the different authors) amounted to five volumes.[89] I was able to track two of those *sīras* in three out of five volumes, all of them in unique and possibly partial copies. The earliest one was written by al-ʿUlufī (it can be dated to 936/1530 based on textual evidence); its first volume is preserved at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana and its second volume is part of the digital collection of the Imam Zayd b. ʿAlī Cultural Foundation (IZbACF).[90] It was followed by the *sīra* composed by al-Zurayqī; this biography focuses on the conquest of Ṣaʿda in 940/1533 and is preserved at the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.[91] An early draft of Zurayqī's *sīra* that covers events prior to the conquest of Ṣaʿda is preserved by IZbACF.[92] Taken together these previously overlooked sources provide a considerably deeper view of state and society in the Sharaf al-Dīn period than reliance on Ibn Mufaḍḍal's later biography of his great-grandfather or ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh's chronicle allow. For example, while our most valuable source on the shape of the Zaydi state in this period contains a day-by-day description of the events of 936/1530 (vol. 2 of al-ʿUlufī's *sīra)*, ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh in his otherwise detailed chronicle summarized the events of that year the following way: "nothing happened [in this year] that is worth celebrating and recording" (*wa-lam yaḥduth fīhā mā yuḥmad*

[89] *al-Zahr al-bāsim fī aḥwāl ʿAbdallāh b. al-Qāsim,* NF C.35.ar, f. 10a.
[90] NF A.3.ar, the author is unidentified in the catalogue; it is mistakenly suggested that the authorship might belong to al-Zurayqī or Ibn Dāʿir. Oscar Löfgren and Renato Traini, *Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana*, Fontes Ambrosiani 51 (Vicenza: N. Pozza, 1975), vol. 2, p. 2 (#3). The second volume *(*shelfmark ZA 561-01, from the library of sayyid Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn al-Mutawakkil and now part of the IZbACF digital collection) of what I postulate to be al-ʿUlufī's *sīra* based on the content is accessible online: https://elibrary.mara.gov.om/mktbtt-muosstt-aliemam-zed-bn-ale-althqafett/mktbtt-muosstt-aliemam-zed-bn-ale-althqafett/ktab/?id=14180#book/5
[91] ÖNB Glaser 39; the author of this work is misidentified in M. Grünert's catalogue as ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh despite a remark in Arabic on the title page correctly suggesting the authorship of al-Zurayqī. The opening parts of this manuscript are incomplete. https://digital.onb.ac.at/RepViewer/viewer.faces?doc=DTL_8685495&order=1&view=SINGLE
[92] ZA 238-02. Accessible online: https://elibrary.mara.gov.om/mktbtt-muosstt-aliemam-zed-bn-ale-althqafett/mktbtt-muosstt-aliemam-zed-bn-ale-althqafett/ktab/?id=11481#book/356

rafʿuhu wa yaḥsun waḍʿuhu).[93] The 936/1530 history of al-ʿUlufī shows the inner workings of the imam's court and administration in unmatched detail. Taken together these detailed *sīras* are an indispensable source for questions related to the functioning of the imamate.

The imam and his court

The fact that imam Sharaf al-Dīn had more than one *sīra* written about him signals the transformation of his power as imam and his status. Contemporaries sought ways to acknowledge his new status as unifier of Yemen. This need to clarify the new position of the Zaydi ruler who for the very first time in the history of Yemen did not face major opponents is most visible in the proliferation of historical writing. The new vision of the imam as a leader of the state is also clear, even if it is not yet articulated in theoretical writing, in the style in which this historical writing is produced – the manuscripts of al-ʿUlufī's *sīras* include sections written in a chancery hand.[94]

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Figure 1. Sample of a page from the sīra of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn by al-ʿUlufī displaying the chancery hand of the copyist. IZbACF, ZA 561-01, ff. 2b-3a.

[93] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 1424, 82.

[94] Both volumes of the *sīra* by al-ʿUlufī are undated. It is probable that these copies were made during the imam's life and prior to the Ottoman conquest. The evidence for this dating of NF A.3.ar includes the local non-watermarked paper (after the Ottoman conquest a large portion of Yemeni Zaydi manuscripts started to be written on watermarked European paper) and marginal notes in the hand of the son of the imam, ʿAbdallāh b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, dating to 934/1528 (NF A.3.ar, f. 163a). A codicological study is necessary to correctly date ZA 561-01. However, the chancellery script of ZA 561-01 and NF A.3.ar seem similar (see fig. 1 & 2), hence I postulate that they were both composed in the time of Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn.

Might this indicate that subtle shifts were taking place in the perception of the imam as primarily a political leader and head of state rather than a religious leader? Might this also indicate that in response to the socio-political transformation period new institutions and professional classes, a court, and an expanded administration with its ranks of officials, was coming into being? This section will address these questions by considering some of the evidence that we can find in primary sources, a task that is complicated by the lack of originals of state documents from this period.

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Figure 2. A sample of the chancery hand from al-ʿUlufī's sīra. Biblioteca Ambrosiana, NF A.3.ar, f. 13a.

Traditionally, one of the Zaydi imam's main functions was to facilitate and foster Zaydi religious study and discourse. The role of Zaydi imams as religious and legal thinkers was stressed in their biographies. In particular, imam al-Mahdī Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā Ibn al-Murtaḍā (d. 840/1437), the grandfather of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, was celebrated for his writings on religious and theological matters, as well as his activities as a teacher and transmitter of knowledge.[95] While this ideal was still present in the Zaydi vision of political legitimacy in the days of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, effectively the proportion of these scholarly and religious activities in the imam's day-to-day tasks was now rather small. Al-ʿUlufī informed his readers that out of the five parts that

[95] In particular his works on *fiqh, al-Baḥr al-zakhkhār* and *Kitāb al-Azhār,* became of central importance to the Zaydi legal school. Eirik Hovden, *Waqf in Zaydi Yemen: Legal Theory, Codification, and Local Practice*, Studies in Islamic Law and Society 46 (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2019), 156–65; Damaris Wilmers, *Beyond Schools: Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Wazīr's (d. 840/1436) Epistemology of Ambiguity*, Islamic History and Civilization (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2018), 44–54.

constituted the "work-day" of the imam, three were fully dedicated to affairs of state and two to prayer. Even during the times of prayer, the imam was available to petitioners. It was only after the evening prayer (*ṣalāt al-maghrib*) that the imam met with the "scholars of all madhhabs" and engaged in discussions.[96] The timing of the scholarly activities – at the very end of a day full of administrative work – might indicate that the imam was increasingly setting aside his scholarly duties. Indeed, in the later periods of his rule we find few notices of study sessions led by him, the one notable exception being the reconciliatory study session with the sayyids and scholars of Ṣaʿda that took place after 940/1534 (see chapter 5).

Al-ʿUlufī insisted that the imam welcomed scholars of all madhhabs at his court, presenting an image of a universal ruler who presides over all Muslim groups. This might seem a familiar topos for a non-Zaydi, in particular, a Sunni ruler.[97] However, it presents an unusual synthesis of ideas of Ahl al-Bayt rule and visions of the ability of imams coming out of their ranks to reconcile differences between different schools of thought in Islam. Why would the chronicler of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn insist on such an image? For the benefit of what audience was this image? Two factors stand out as most important. Firstly, with the conquest of Lower Yemen imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn now ruled a population that included a large group of Shāfiʿīs. The image of a Zaydi ruler who is open to non-Zaydi madhhabs was the only way to keep this group involved in the political project. The imam strove to make his court attractive to Shāfiʿī scholars; among those who benefited from his patronage was Ṣāliḥ b. Siḍḍīq al-Namāzī (d. 965/1558), a scholar from the

[96] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn*, vol. 2, ZA 561-01, f. 38a: *thumma yaqif ayḍan li-l-ifāda fī ʿulūm al-dīn wa-murājaʿat aʿyān al-ʿulamāʾ al-rāshidīn wa yajtamiʿ fī ḥaḍratihi al-sharīfa min aʿyān ahl al-madhāhib kullihā … wa ahl al-tajwīd li-l-qirāʾāt al-sabʿ.*

[97] One similarity to note here is with the Mamluk rulers of Egypt who supported a system of four chief judges. Yossef Rapoport, "Legal Diversity in the Age of Taqlīd: The Four Chief Qāḍīs under the Mamluks," *Islamic Law and Society* 10, no. 2 (2003): 210–28.

Tihāma who moved to Ṣanʿāʾ and composed an *urjūza* on the genealogy of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn.[98]

Secondly, due to the territorial expansion of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate now controlled large segments of the pilgrim route that connected the maritime regions of Yemen with Mecca and Medina, and which was, most probably, often used by Muslims travelling from Oman, South Asia and the Horn of Africa. This increasingly put the imamate in contact with scholars travelling from regions where Zaydism did not have a foothold. Among such people who passed through Ṣanʿāʾ was Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Tabrīzī, a scholar from Tabrīz who first arrived in Yemen in the days of the 933-34/1527-28 plague. The imam welcomed him and helped him travel to the Hijaz, and two years later the scholar was still writing to the imam.[99] One would assume that such intellectual exchanges were precisely the kind of meeting of "all madhhabs" that the chronicler wanted to celebrate in a biography of the ruler and that it was also for such globe-trotting visitors that the new image was created.

If the scholarly component of the imam's skillset was slowly pushed to the margins of his work, his image as patron of the arts, especially poetry, was celebrated. In the first volume of al-

[98] Ṣāliḥ b. Ṣiddīq al-Namāzī, *Kitāb al-nūr al-lāʾiḥ fī mashāyikh ṣāliḥ*, ed. Muḥammad b. Manṣūr Āl Ḥāwī, Silsilat turāth ʿulamāʾ al-Mikhlāf al-Sulaymānī (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ḥakamī, 1439), 87–88. This would also suggest that the *sīra* was read out in the court of the imam – if the Shafiʿī subjects of the imam had no opportunity to learn of this presentation then it would not have mattered.

[99] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn*, vol. 2, ZA 561-01 f. 42b-43a. How a man from Tabrīz reached Yemen is open to interpretation; one possibility is that he got there via India. I had not been able to identify him so far. It is possible that the astronomer and doctor ʿAbd al-Raḥīm b. Muḥammad al-Tabrīzī (d. 965/1558) who served Özdemir Pasha and dedicated a book on medicine to Muṭahhar b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn was his son. The son of this doctor, qāḍī Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm b. Muḥammad al-Tabrīzī, is known to have resided in Zabīd in the days of Bahrām Pasha and to have fulfilled official functions for the Ottoman government. Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 1424, 147. *Bulūgh al-marām,* BNF AR. 651, ff. 69b-70a, 71a-73a, 82b-83a.

ʿUlufī's *sīra* that concludes with the events of 934/1528 the narration of each year ends with a selection of poetry composed in honor of the imam in that period. Moreover, al-ʿUlufī preserved information on how these poems reached the imam: most often, as transpires from the second volume of his biography, they arrived as letters to the court to celebrate the news of the imam's victories and were occasionally recited in his presence.[100] On a few occasions, poetry was "presented" to the imam in oral form, during delegation visits.[101] These gifts of eloquence were not selfless – poets, who were often scholars and sayyids from different locales, expected a reward. Unfortunately, the biographers rarely recorded information about such rewards, which might be an indication that influence and prestige rather than monetary compensation was at stake for the participants in the exchange. However, in one report preserved in the *sīra* of the imam, we learn that a talented poet could expect to be paid by the line (*bayt*) of poetry and in a lump sum for a witty passage of rhymed prose.[102] All in all, poetry was flourishing at the court of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, reinforcing his image as a patron of the defining art of the Arabs.

This state attention to poetic production in the circles of scholars seems to correspond to a broader trend observed in various Muslim societies and researched in particular in the Persianate

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[100] For example, a poem from a Tihāma scholar was delivered as a letter and the messenger recited it (*qaraʿ munsidan*). Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn,* vol. 2, ZA 561-10, f. 18b. Other poems on occasions are described in the *sīra* as well. See al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, ff. 124a, 141b, 164a.

[101] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn,* vol. 2, ZA 561-10, ff. 122a, 126b. It is possible that it was actually sung out to the imam, in particular if this was poetry in the *ḥumaynī* genres. Jean Lambert, *La médecine de l'âme : le chant de Sanaa dans la société yéménite*, Hommes et musiques ; 2 (Nanterre: Société d'ethnologie, 1997), 75–78, 117–26.

[102] Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Dhamārī, a resident and *khaṭīb* of Ṣaʿda, wrote a poem of 29 *bayt*s addressed to the imam as a congratulation on the conquest of Kuḥlān. For this poem he received 29 *ūqīya*s, one per *bayt*, and an additional two *ūqīya*s for a letter attached to it in which he made fun of the people of Shaṭab. The poet was also honored with a response drafted by one of the *kuttāb* of the imam with an autograph of the imam. Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn*, vol. 2, ZA 561-01 f. 139b: *wa ajāb ʿalayhi baʿḍ kuttāb al-imām ʿalayhi al-salām wa alḥaqa al-imām .. fī-l-ḥāshīya bi-khaṭṭ yadihi al-karīma mā lafẓuhu …*

context in this period that can be characterized as a merging of courtly, scholarly and administrative skills.[103] While poetry always formed part of *sīras* of Zaydi imams, I was not able to trace a similar chronological arrangement in pre-Sharaf al-Dīn *sīras*, in which poetry, if cited, would more often belong to the authorship of the imam or his family.[104] The development of literary patronage at the imam's court indicates an increased level of socio-political and economic development, a growth of complexity in state, society and the economy that bolstered literary production as a mode of network-building and patronage. In the case of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate the increased literary production at the imam's court and among those aspiring to join it and the distancing from narrow Zaydi definitions of the imam's role both point to a transformation of the Zaydi state in this period.

The administration

The persona of the Zaydi imam and his court were inseparable from his administration. However, one thing that immediately stands out in our consideration of this intersection of the

[103] Emma J. Flatt, *The Courts of the Deccan Sultanates: Living Well in the Persian Cosmopolis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), chap. 4 (pp. 167-209); Sara Nur Yıldız, "Aydınid Court Literature in the Formation of an Islamic Identity in Fourteenth-Century Western Anatolia," in *Islamic Literature and Intellectual Life in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century Anatolia*, ed. A.C.S. Peacock and Sara Nur Yıldız, Istanbuler Texte und Studien (Ergon Verlag Würzburg in Kommission, 2016), 197–241.

[104] The *sīra* of imam al-Hādī ilā-l-ḥaqq, for example, includes a section of poems by his son. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. ʿUbaydallāh al-ʿAlawī, *Sīrat al-Hādī ilā-l-ḥaqq Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1972), 253–70. An anonymous sīra of the grandfather of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, al-Mahdī Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā Ibn al-Murtaḍā included a section of poems composed by the imam. *Sīrat al-imām al-Mahdī li-dīn allāh Aḥmad b. Yahyā al-Murtaḍā,* YMDI_03_20, ff. 26-39. (https://catalog.princeton.edu/catalog/7849222). Some of letters of al-Hādī include poems (letter to banī al-Ḥārith concludes with three poems by the imam, al-ʿAlawī, 275–81.), as well as the letters that he received, indicating that the poetic form had an important epistolary function in his time. A later imam's *sīra* could include examples of *madḥ* poetry, but no yearly arrangement of poetry produced in honor of the imam. Musallam al-Laḥjī, *The Sīra of Imām Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Nāṣir Li-Dīn Allāh from Musallam al-Laḥjī's Kitāb akhbār al-zaydīya bi l-Yaman*, ed. Wilferd Madelung, Oxford Oriental Institute Monographs (Exeter: Ithaca Press / Oxford Oriental Institute, 1990), 11–12.

figure of the ruler and his administration is that imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn spent most of his time not in Ṣanʿāʾ, Yemen's largest urban center, but outside of it, in Thulā, a fort near Ṣanʿāʾ. The court of the imam in the sense of his retinue and some members of his family resided with him in Thulā, but there is less clarity about the permanent location of the administration.

The imam's decision not to reside in Ṣanʿāʾ merits some discussion. Imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn could certainly have based himself in the city, as was the practice of his predecessors, the Banū al-Wazīr imams and imam al-Sirājī. His choice to keep a base in Thulā was probably military – this fort allowed him to engage in campaigns against the Ismāʿīlīs who lived to the north-west of Ṣanʿāʾ and to easily travel for tax collection in the Ḥajja region. However, with territorial expansion and after victories against the Ismāʿīlīs, the imam's mobility decreased; the tasks of travelling for inspections and campaigns were delegated to his sons Muṭahhar and Shams al-Dīn and seemingly there was no longer any need to stay outside of Ṣanʿāʾ. The imam, however, stayed on in Thulā. If we were to assume Khaldunian sensitivities in the imam's milieu, we could argue that he was maintaining a certain distancing from urban dwellers and their luxuries. Quite possibly, however, the imam simply wanted to stay close to his support base, which was located not in Ṣanʿāʾ, but in the Ḥajja region. As will be shown in chapter 3, the early Qasimid imams followed a similar logic by keeping their capital in Shahāra even after Ṣanʿāʾ surrendered to them.

As a result of this choice of location, the imam had to deal with a great number of delegations, including from members of his own family who were resident in Ṣanʿāʾ and other locations in Yemen.[105] The few preserved descriptions of such visits indicate that on these occasions the imam sought to affirm the religious foundations of his rule. For example, when his leading

[105] For example, al-ʿUlufī reports that Muṭahhar was ordered to visit Thulā for consultations. Similarly, ʿIzz al-Dīn, another son of the imam, was summoned to Thulā. Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn,* vol. 2, ZA 561-01, ff. 102ab, 157b-158a, 161a.

administrator and general, faqīh Yaḥyā b. Ibrāhīm al-Nuṣayrī, came to visit him, one of the activities he engaged in side by side the imam that was noted by the chronicler was pray.[106] This is a recognizable mode of confirming a relationship of trust between a leader claiming religious authority and his subject, but not so much if one notes that Yaḥyā al-Nuṣayrī held the title of faqīh, or jurist. The fact that the imam chose to pray with him rather than hold a study session indicates, on the one hand, that the faqīh was not really engaged in scholarship and, on the other, that the imam was prioritizing certain activities over others.

The merging of the court of the imam with government is visible on those occasions when the court was used for adjudication. Interestingly, however, we do not have cases of the imam playing the role of a qāḍī in a shariʿa court or even of a mufti issuing opinions on legal matters, even though with his educational credentials he would have qualified to fulfil both functions.[107] Instead, the matters that were addressed here concerned the interactions of the imam's government and his subjects. One such instance, described in the *sīra,* happened in Jumādā II 936 / February 1530 when a delegation of two tribes arrived to complain to the imam about the injustice of the governor appointed by him (called both *ʿāmil* and *wālī* in the text).[108] The official was recalled to the court of the imam and a meeting between the two conflicting sides was staged at court. The imam oversaw the meeting, conducting a verification (*taḥqīq)* of the claims, concluded that the *wālī* was indeed at fault, and immediately dismissed him from office.

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[106] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn,* vol. 2, ZA 561-01, ff. 6b-7a.
[107] One exception to this was legal responsa that the imam issued during his time in office; these were, however, usually requested by scholars and most probably constituted theoretical debates rather than practical decisions to be implemented.
[108] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn,* vol. 2, ZA 561-01 ff. 37ab: *waṣala jamāʿa min banī al-Ḥarath ahl al-Raḥba wa banī Shihāb al-Ḥuḍūr yashkūn ʿalā-l-imām ... min jawr ʿāmil kān ʿalayhim.*

In a similar context, the imam was expected – in a continuation of a practice established by imam al-Hādī ilā-l-ḥaqq – to mediate between the tribes. The same tribes who complained about the governor returned to the court of the imam in ramaḍān 936 / May 1530, to request a pardon (*ṣafḥ*) for their behavior at a recently captured fort, where members of the tribe killed local inhabitants and then deserted. In particular, the delegation requested the imam to negotiate the settlement between the tribes – the amount of blood money and the retaliation (*al-diyāt wa-l-qiṣāṣ*).[109] This is an example of a conflict that only the imam as head of state and a respected figure standing above tribal divisions could settle.

Relatedly, another important function of the imam and his government was to organize food storage and redistribution of wealth.[110] This function, like mediation between tribes, was linked to the position of the imam above tribal divisions as a member of the Ahl al-Bayt. Across Zaydi history we find numerous instances in which this practice was repeated. The period of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn is no exception to this rule. The *sīra* of the imam stresses as one of his greatest miracles the fact that even prior to becoming an imam he was highly efficient at managing grain repositories in Ḥajja (see also chapter 4 for a discussion of this episode). This linked the figure of the imam to collection of income and its redistribution to the population and played into traditional topoi of the justice and generosity of the ruler.

However, as the practice of the earlier, territorially smaller Zaydi imamates already showed, no imam could control all these administrative tasks. Agents had to be selected for the purpose of government. Since the days of al-Hādī ilā-l-ḥaqq two practices stand out in this regard:

[109] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn,* vol. 2, ZA 561-01, ff. 156b-157a.
[110] Arendonk, *Les débuts de l'imāmat zaidite au Yémen*, 136.

the appointment of sayyids as local governors and joint appointments to the same position.[111] In accordance with this tradition, imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn relied on sayyids and scholars in his administration.[112] Among the officials I was able to trace, almost a half, 27 out of 63, were sayyids, 20 were scholars (with titles *faqīh* and *qāḍī*) and the remaining officials were of either tribal or possibly slave background. Appointments of sayyids were important as a demonstration of mutual allegiance. For example, in 924/1518 imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn appointed sayyid Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥūthī, a relative of the Banū al-Wazīr, as *wālī* of Dhamār.[113] He also had an aid – sayyid Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. ʿUṭayfa, and together they were responsible for order in the city and, among other things, for ensuring that both the residents of the city and the tribes of the surrounding mountains provided men for the army (*alzama al-ʿasākir*).[114] Due to the geopolitical importance of Dhamār for control over the highland plains, Muṭahhar b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn made regular visits to the city and neighboring regions, acting, in effect, as an additional "occasional" governor.

Officials of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate had broad authority and a wide range of responsibilities, as was necessitated by continuing territorial expansion and the difficulty for the imam of single-handedly making all relevant decisions. One such powerful figure of the Sharaf al-Dīn

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[111] Al-Hādī ilā-l-ḥaqq seems to have established the tradition of dual appointments: in his first year in Yemen, he appointed Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-ʿAlawī as governor (*ʿāmil*) of Najrān jointly with Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā, an Iraqi Bedouin. Arendonk, 145. It seems that while their appointment was joint, they had slightly different functions, as Aḥmad was responsible for adherence to *sharīʿa,* being a pious scholar.

[112] The founder of the Zaydi imamate in Yemen, al-Hādī ilā-l-ḥaqq established this tradition. There seem to have been few sāda in Yemen when al-Hādī arrived there with his family and two loyal ʿAlids, whom he proceeded to appoint as governors. Among the governors he appointed were sayyids, scholars, and people of tribal background, from the clans of Ṣaʿda that invited al-Hādī to Yemen. This tradition of relying on a particular tribal group for government can also be traced in the Sharaf al-Dīn period. Arendonk, 131, 145–46, 147–48, 164, 215.

[113] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar, f. 250b.

[114] Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 250b.

period is faqīh Yaḥyā b. Ibrāhīm al-Nuṣayr (or al-Nuṣayrī). This scholar was imitating the imam whom he was serving, by styling himself as a patron of scholarship.[115] The flowery title used in the manuscript's patronage (*bi-rasm*) statement and the fact that he is known to have attended several teaching sessions of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn imply that the scholar was engaged in intellectual exchange;[116] however, his biography is not mentioned in any Yemeni biographical dictionaries, and, as remarked earlier, when he would meet the imam they would only pray together.

On multiple occasions this scholar embodied the functions of a high-ranking military officer, governor and financial official. In 936/1530 he travelled to the recently conquered regions of Jabal Ḥarām and al-Sharaf.[117] There he had the authority to appoint *wālī*s (*taqrīr qawāʿid al-wulāt fīhi*), to relocate the local *ashrāf*, to set the tax amount (*taʿyīn khamsīn alf dīnār kull dīnār qaflī (?) ʿalā baʿḍ jihāt al-Sharaf*), to capture fort al-Qafl that the text of the *sīra* identifies as a strategically and economically important location (*wa huwa aṣl fī jihat al-Sharaf wa fīhi nafʿ ʿaẓīm*), to appoint a *wālī* there, and to collect funds among the locals (*farraq ʿalā banī Jall wa-l-Ṭaraf amwālan wāsiʿa wa arsala ilayhā jamāʿa li-qabḍihā*).[118] Similarly, after the conquest of the fort Kuḥlān al-Kabīr, the imam and the faqīh travelled to the conquered locale. After the departure

[115] NF H.30.ar, f. 257b. The patronage statement is dated 7 rabīʿ al-thānī, 955 / May 16, 1548. This manuscript deserves further exploration due to the layering of the copying process that is visible in it, see a *firāgh* statement from 805/1402 on f. 253a and an ownership statement from 837/1433 on f. 4a. These statements indicate that Yaḥyā b. Ibrāhīm possibly did not sponsor the production of the manuscript but rather its revision.
[116] In particular the 940/1528 reading sessions for imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's new work, *al-Athmār.* Al-Zurayqī, ÖNB Glaser 39, f. 24b.
[117] Jabal Ḥarām was characterized by the author of the *sīra* as a location that allowed the imam to control both lower and upper Sharaf (*rākib li-bilād al-Sharaf al-Asfal wa ḥākim ʿalā al-Sharaf al-aʿlā*), and as a gateway to a future conquest of the Tihāma (*huwa bāb fatḥ Tihāma* (sic)). Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn*, vol. 2, ZA 561-01, ff. 105b-106a.
[118] Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, f. 134b.

of the imam, it was the faqīh who remained there to appoint governors, and to take over the command of the army in the region (*istilḥāq al-jund al-manṣūr bi-llāh min al-bilād al-imāmīya).*[119]

The career of Yaḥyā b. Ibrāhīm took him across Yemen, thus confirming our analysis of the immense territorial transformation and administrative expansion of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate. He appears in the descriptions of events in 936/1529-30 as the official travelling on the imam's behalf in al-Sharaf, leading military operations in Qurāḍa, Jabal Ḥarām, and the territories of the Banū Maṭar, and supporting Shams al-Dīn and Muṭahhar, the sons of the imam, in their expeditions.[120] Tribes requested his presence from the imam, as they saw him as a responsible administrator.[121] They also reached out to him, as a representative of the imam, with pledges of allegiance that often included the delivery of hostages.[122] In 941/1534 we find him in Ṣaʿda, shortly after the city submitted to the power of the imam. He was the first appointed governor there and his role was, it seems, to prepare the stage for the transfer of the governorship to one of the sons of the imam.[123] He then disappears from the historical record for a decade until we rediscover him in Taʿizz in 953/1546 and later in the Tihāma, as *ʿāmil* of the imam in Mikhlāf Jaʿfar.[124] In 955/1548 we know he sponsored the production of a copy of *al-Kashshāf,* but after that his traces are lost – except for the fact that his son ʿAbd al-Mughnī appeared in association with the Ottoman governor Yemenli Hasan Pasha.[125] The social (and possibly material) capital accumulated by this leading

[119] Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, f. 136a.
[120] Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, ff. 6a-7a, 15b.
[121] The Banū Ḥajjāj of the Ḥajja region placed such a request in jumada II 936/ February 1530. Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, f. 72b.
[122] Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, f. 141b.
[123] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 1424, 94, 103–4.
[124] Fayrūz, *Maṭāliʿ al-nīrān,* BNF Ar. 1651, ff. 4b/6b, 20a/22a; al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 41b.
[125] Al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan fī akhbār siyar al-bāshā Ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 447, ff. 70, 89, 117, 124.

official of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate allowed his son to make it into the historical record as a member of the Yemeni elite.

The career of Yaḥyā b. Ibrāhīm in the Sharaf al-Dīn period showcases the speed of territorial expansion that the imamate underwent and the related shortages of qualified and trusted administrators. There is nevertheless other evidence that points to the administrative development of the Zaydi imamate in this period.

Documentary traces of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate

When one thinks of the Zaydi imamate in Yemen, one rarely conjures an image of an archive. The local archives that we know of are usually discussed in the context of *qāḍī* courts.[126] However, these institutions were not alone in the production of documents. Even though few originals survive, textual evidence points to a vibrant bureaucratic culture in the administration of Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn.

The administration of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate, as was discussed earlier, revolved around the figure of the imam. Due to the personalistic nature of government, many orders were issued orally, resulting from decisions made in personal meetings with the imam. Among such examples are the discussion between the imam and his son Shams al-Dīn, as well as the imam and faqīh Yaḥyā b. Ibrāhīm al-Nuṣayrī, concerning the strategy for appeasing a revolt in ʿUrr Banī al-Aʿḍab.[127] However, due to the sheer size of the Sharaf al-Dīn political project, a substantial amount

[126] Qāḍī court records have been extensively used by Brinkley Messick in his research on law in Yemen. Brinkley M. Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Brinkley M. Messick, *Sharīʿa Scripts: A Historical Anthropology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).
[127] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn,* vol. 2, ZA 561-01, f. 7a: *fa-waqaʿat al-mufāwaḍa mushāfahatan fī dhālika.*

of paperwork was expected from the imam. This took the form of letters (*kutub*) containing orders. Not all these missives were delivered in written form. In at least one case a message from the imam to his son Muṭahhar was delivered orally – the *sīra* states that Muṭahhar listened (*samiʿa*) to the order.[128] But even in this case, the underlying document was a written missive. On any given day, according to the biographer, the imam would produce over a hundred documents, among them answers to complaints (*shikāyāt*) in addition to an undetermined number of responsa (*jawābāt*) that he would write in his own hand.[129]

If we were to come up with a typology of documents produced by the Sharaf al-Dīn administration, several types of documents would stand out. The above-mentioned *kutub* are a category of documents that were produced both by the imam and his officials and seem to represent a type of report on current affairs. Summaries of such reports can be found in the *sīras,* and while no description of the rules pertaining to such documents, for example, the schedule that one needed to adhere to to produce them is available, they seem to have been the main tool of governance. In addition, *kutub* could also be epistles that contained poetry and rhymed prose with no direct administrative function.

Aside from the broad category of *kutub,* there were several other types of administrative documents – *rasm, ʿahd, qawāʿid* and others. As we shall see, historians stressed the guaranteeing aspect of all these documents; they were all seen as confirmations on behalf of the imam to the other side that an existing order or a new arrangement would not be violated.

[128] Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, ff. 5b-6a.
[129] Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, f. 74b.

The only example of a *rasm* (order) that I was able to locate is in fact an *iqṭāʿ* (tax farm) guarantee.[130] It was issued by the imam in 925/1519 to sayyid ʿIzz al-Dīn b. Ḥasan b. al-imām al-Hādī ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Muʾayyadī through the mediation of faqīh Dāwud b. Ibrāhīm al-Qāʿī al-Madānī al-Ḥārithī.[131] This *rasm,* as far as we can reconstruct from the description in the *sīra,* is one of the earliest examples of an *iqṭāʿ* appointment in the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate. But, in al-ʿUlufī's description, rather than establishing an *iqṭāʿ,* this document guaranteed the protection of an existing one. The sayyid, according to al-ʿUlufī, reached out to the imam through the faqīh with a letter (*kitāb*) that proclaimed his allegiance to the imam by, specifically, proclaiming his land the land of the imam (*inna al-bilād bilāduhu [bilād al-imām] wa innahu min jumlat awlādihi [awlād al-imām])* and by acknowledging that his position was that of subservience to the imam. This last point was expressed by describing the writer as someone whom the imam "puts in a position of those who send delegations to the imam" (*innahu yaḍaʿahu mawḍiʿ al-mutawaffidīn ilayhi*). The imam responded to this letter by providing a guarantee (*ajāb ʿalā-l-sayyid bi-rasm mutaḍammin li-iqṭāʿ al-sayyid*). The *rasm* guaranteed that the sayyid would control Banī ʿAshab, Ashmūr and al-Ṭaraf and would hold the position of *wālī* there while recognizing the imam as the sovereign ruler (lit.: "he is the *wālī* except in *ḥukm,* authority") (*al-bilād bilād al-imām wa innamā huwa [al-sayyid] illā fī ḥukmihi al-wālī*).[132] It is not entirely clear how this *iqṭāʿ* appointment worked side by side with appointments of governors to the same region. We know from other sources that in 936/1529 the imam replaced his governor in the region, faqīh ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Ḥamīd, with sayyid

[130] One should remark here that I was so far able to find only one instance of use of this term in this context; more commonly in the Yemeni context *rasm* is used in expressions of patronage (as for example *bi-rasm*).
[131] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar, ff. 155ab.
[132] Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 155b. *Ḥukm* has a broad semantic field in Arabic; it could also mean here that the wālī was not allowed to adjudicate.

Ḥasan b. Ṣalāḥ b. Ḥasan al-Muʾayyadī,[133] but I have not yet been able to find further information on the career of sayyid ʿIzz al-Dīn.

The topos of guaranteeing order appears in other documents issued by the imam, in a broad category of *ʿahd* (treaty). In the time of al-Hādī a *ʿahd* was used as a nomination document for an agent of the imam.[134] In the Sharaf al-Dīn period, I have not encountered mentions of *ʿahd* in this context. Instead, the term is regularly invoked at the end of a conquest of a region as a guarantee of the imam to provide protection to the people of the conquered region. In this usage it is parallel to such agreements as *amān* (protection) and *rufāqa* (travel companionship). It is unclear whether all such agreements were fixed in written form, but some were. Sources speak of *khutūṭ al-amān* – written agreements of safe passage – that were signed by the imam and his followers (and even their opponents) to gain and preserve supporters.[135] Nevertheless, the extent of the spread of these written agreements is unclear, and if they remained rare, it is notable that even in oral form such agreements were functional elements of the administration in a state of such size and complexity as was the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate.

The central component of all such agreements, regardless of the way in which they were made known and existed, was the personal guarantee of the imam that things would remain in order. In 933/1527, after the army of the imam captured al-Jamīma, they came to control the local treasuries (*makhāzin*).[136] The imam then provided a guarantee (*ʿuhda*) that the money and property

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[133] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 2, ZA 561-01, ff. 63b-64a.
[134] Arendonk, *Les débuts de l'imāmat zaidite au Yémen*, 136.
[135] Al-Zurayqī, *Sīrat al-imām Sharaf al-Dīn Yaḥyā,* ÖNB Glaser 39, f. 20b (*khuṭūṭ al-amān* issued by sayyid Yaḥyā b. Aḥmad in 940/1534); al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar, f. 134a (members of Āl al-Muʾayyad issue *al-khuṭūṭ bi-l-amān* to residents of al-Sūd in 924/1518 to jointly fight against imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn), f. 299b (Muṭahhar, son of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, issues *khuṭūṭ* to rebels of Banū Qays in 934/1528).
[136] Jamīmat banī al-Dhawwād is in southern Ḥajja; al-ʿUlufī writes of it as "the lock and key of Lāʿa" (*qufl Lāʿa wa miftāḥuhā*). Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 282b.

that were located in these *makhāzin* would be protected – which in the context seems to have meant that it would not be taken out of the community and relocated to the treasury of the imam but would remain in al-Jamīma in one single treasury.[137] Even after an agreement had been made between the imam (or his representative) and a local population, it could be additionally confirmed. For example, in 926/1520 shaykhs of Ḥajja travelled to the imam to receive an *ʿahd* from him. The shaykhs of Ḥajja were already supporters of the imam by that time (the source describes them as *aʿyān shīʿat al-imām*) and were probably revising an existing agreement and confirming that the imam guaranteed their position and status.[138] In a more elevated use of the term, the "accord of the imam" (*ʿahd al-imām / al-ʿahd al-imāmīya* (sic)) was invoked when the officials of the imam were expected to protect areas or people that fell under the guarantees of such accords. One such situation occurred during the plague of 933/1527 in Ṣanʿāʾ; an appointee of the imam abandoned his post due to his fear of the illness and as a result chaos ensued among his subordinates. Faqīh Yaḥyā b. Ibrāhīm al-Nuṣayr, whom we encountered earlier, was called upon by the imam to intervene and protect the accord (*qām bi-ḥifẓ al-ʿahd al-imāmī*).[139] In another occurrence, the need to uphold the guarantee of the imam was invoked for the protection of a fortress that was part of a territory under the protection of the imam (*ḥifẓ al-ḥiṣn … al-dākhil fī jumlat al-ʿahd al-imāmīya* (sic)).[140]

While there is no certainty about the written character of these agreements, certain documents were put down in writing in registers (*musawwadāt*).[141] A truce (*ṣulḥ*) most often merited

[137] Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 283a.
[138] Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 186b.
[139] Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 289b.
[140] Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 256a.
[141] The term *musawwada* to denote a register continued to be used in Zaydi Yemen in the Qasimid period even if the form of these registers resembled Ottoman models. A recent edition of five Qasimid *musawwadāt* of imamic property demonstrates how later Zaydi documents followed Ottoman registration templates while alluding to a pre-Ottoman genealogy: Ḥusayn ʿAbdallāh ʿAmrī, ed., *Musawwadāt amlāk khamsat aʾimma wa-warathatuhum : al-Mahdī*

such a registration. For example, in 929/1523 when a peace was reached between imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn and the Yemeni Ismāʿīlīs, the conditions of the peace were registered (*ruqima dhālika fī-l-musawwadāt*). Another category of documents that was fixed in registers included agreements with the tribes. In later periods these documents were known as *qawāʿid.*[142] In the Sharaf al-Dīn period, however, there is information that such agreements were also added to the *musawwadāt*-registers. In one example, in 936/1530 the people of Ẓulayma pledged allegiance to the imam. To guarantee the alliance they provided hostages (*rahāʾin*) and the imam on his side promised to fight against their enemies and ensured the registration of the agreement.[143] The use of the plural form in all these cases is notable and raises the question – that I am unable to answer at this point – whether there were several registers in which such agreements were written down.

One can speculate that the registers were possibly arranged in a chronological manner like the Ottoman *mühimme* registers. This is a distinct possibility since the *sīras* of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, especially the two volumes of al-ʿUlufī's work, were also arranged day-by-day. Al-ʿUlufī and al-Zurayqī were both members of Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's government and could oversee the compilation of the said registers; the possible overlap of history-writing and document production could explain the chancery-like scripts of the copies of al-ʿUlufī's *sīra* (see figures 1 and 2

ʿAbbās, al-Manṣūr ʿAlī, al-Mutawwakil Aḥmad, al-Mahdī ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Mutawwakil Aḥmad wa-ibnahu ʿAlī ibn al-Mahdī, 1161-1251 / 1748-1835: taḥqīq wa-dirāsa fī al-ʿalāqāt al-iqtiṣādīya wa-l-ijtimāʿīya fī al-Yaman (Ṣanʿāʾ / Dimashq: al-Maʿhad al-faransī li-l-athār wa-l-ʿulūm al-ijtimāʿīya bi-Ṣanʿāʾ / Dār al-Fikr, 2005).

[142] Dresch has published a selection of such documents from the eighteenth century onwards, and these remain the only surviving examples of the *qawāʿid*. Paul Dresch, *The Rules of Barat. Tribal Documents from Yemen: Texts and Translation*, Textes et documents sur la péninsule Arabique (Sanaa: Centre français d'archéologie et de sciences sociales, 2016), http://books.openedition.org/cefas/752.

[143] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 2, ZA 561-01, f. 157a: *wuḍiʿat muswaddāt li-ahl Ẓulayma ʿalā al-qiyām maʿahum ʿalā aʿādīhim al-mukhālifīn li-l-imām ayyadahu llāh taʿālā baʿd an waḍaʿū rahāʾin mukhtāra fī taslīm ʿahdihim.*

above).[144] Another possible argument comes from the fact that Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal, the author of *al-Sulūk al-dhahabīya,* complained that the biographies of his father existed in *musawwada* form.[145] While one could think that he was referring to drafts, seeing the copies of Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's *sīras* one must admit that they do not resemble a typical messy draft, but their distinctive characteristic is their chronological arrangement. Hence the complaint about lack of organization and refinement in the final product could be directed at the arrangement of the content rather than the form of these manuscripts.

Finally, at least one such collection of documents was dedicated to the registration of waqfs. The register in question was composed in Ṣanʿāʾ after the plague of 933/1526-27.[146] While there is abundant textual evidence that the above-listed registers existed and were a tool of central government in Yemen in the Sharaf al-Dīn period, to date no Western scholar has seen an example of such documents. What survives to date as samples of documents from the period are short summaries in the *sīra*-narratives that were used in this analysis and a collection of letters of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, preserved in a unique manuscript in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana. This collection attests to attempts of the followers of the imam to cull and arrange his documentary heritage under the rubric of matters pertaining to Zaydism as an ideological system or *adab*. The selection of letters preserved in NF A.26.ar includes poems, *rasāʾil* (epistles) exchanged with Zaydi scholars

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[144] The first volume of al-ʿUlufī has a section (NF A.3.ar, ff. 1a-63b) copied in a generously large hand with wide spacing that conforms to chancery script rules. The style of handwriting is striking in comparison to the second section that starts on f. 64a (there is no gap in the text) copied in a regular, non-chancery hand. A similar chancery hand is found in the second volume, ZA 561-01, throughout. On the distinctiveness and genealogy of chancery hands in the Abbasid and post-Abbasid world see Marina Rustow, *The Lost Archive. Traces of a Caliphate in a Cairo Synagogue*, Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Ancient to the Modern World (Princeton / Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020), chap. 7 (pp. 173-206).

[145] Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal, *Al-Sulūk al-dhahabīya*, 70. *Akthar mā ʿathartu ʿalayhi musawwadāt lam yantaẓim tartībuhā wa lā kamula tahdhībuhā.*

[146] Hovden, *Waqf in Zaydi Yemen*, 91–92.

and opponents, *jawābāt* (responsa) concerning matters as varied as whether angels have *taklīf* and correct procedures for divorce, and diplomatic exchanges with the sharīfs of Mecca. None of these documents reflect the mundane production of documents in Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's imamate, and the way they are preserved, as copies of the content rather than original documents, limits their use for an administrative history of the region.

Taxation

Our knowledge of the economy of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate is rather scarce. One theme I hoped I would be able discuss in greater detail was the development of coffee production in Yemen which must have coincided with the expansion of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate, but I have not so far discovered any new evidence on the matter. Other questions that I am currently unable to address in detail are the extent of monetization of the Sharaf al-Dīn economy and trade development in the region. We know that once the imam considered that he had secured his position he issued his own coinage. Al-ʿUlufī informs us that the first silver dirhams (*al-dirham al-mutawakkilī*) were struck in 932/1526 in fort Ghumdān in Ṣanʿāʾ.[147] We do not know however how the coin circulated in Yemen and what other coins were regularly used by the population. Nevertheless, some details on these topics emerge from the sources, mostly in the context of discussing taxes, gifts, and to a lesser extent plunder. This section will consider this partial evidence while focusing on one key aspect of the imamate's economic policy – taxation.

Narratives from the period of al-Hādī ilā-l-ḥaqq, the founder of the Zaydi imamate, speak of a taxation system at the heart of which stood *ʿushr,* a 10% tax collected on yields from irrigated

[147] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar, f. 281a. Al-ʿUlufī provides the name of the person who designed the dirham – shaykh Ḥasan b. Yūsuf al-Kidād.

lands.[148] I have not been able to find any information about this tax being collected in the times of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn. What appears instead to be the key tax in the region at the time is the *zakāt,* and what historians stress about it is not so much the collection of the tax, but the power and responsibility of the imam to redistribute it. In particular, the imam was expected to divide the resources of the zakat and of the *buyūt al-amwāl* between the poor and the scholars (*li-l-fuqarāʾ wa-l-masākīn wa-l-ʿulamāʾ wa-l-mutaʿallimīn*). This duty is underlined in a marginal note in al-ʿUlufī's *sīra* that links the correct execution of this responsibility to legitimate rule: "may the reader of this *sīra* be assured that if the imam empties the *buyūt al-amwāl* to provide for the poor, the scholars and the students, that is the duty and that is known to them and to the descendants of the Prophet, then he who does it – there is no objection to that, and he who prevents it is unjust and will account for it."[149] An underlying concern here seems to be that sayyids would receive portions of the *zakāt* that are not intended for them, a topic that was hotly debated in the Qasimid period[150] and was already beginning to develop as a concern in the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate.[151]

Zakāt and other taxes were collected in both cash and kind.[152] In a rare example of a description of a written agreement between the state (represented by the imam) and the tribe, we

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[148] Arendonk, *Les débuts de l'imāmat zaidite au Yémen*, 137–38.

[149] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar, f. 102a: *yataḥaqqaq al-muṭāliʿ li-hādhihi-l-sīra al-mubāraka anna kān (?) al-imām ʿalayhi […] yunfiqu akthar buyūt al-amwāl fī-l-fuqarāʾ wa-l-masākīn wa-l-ʿulamā wa-l-mutaʿallimīn ʿalā anna dhālika yajib lahum wa yastaḥiqqūhu wa hum wa kāffat ahl bayt rasūl allāh ṣallā ʿalayhi wa-sallam maʿrūf<īn> dhālika fa-man faʿala dhālika fa-lā ḥaraj ʿalayhi wa man manaʿa dhālika fa-kān al-ḥaraj ʿalayhi wa-l-ḥisāb bayn yadayhi.*

[150] R. B. Serjeant and Ḥusayn b. ʿAbdallāh al-ʿAmrī, "Administrative Organisation," in *Ṣanʿāʾ: An Arabian Islamic City* (London: Melisende, 2013), 156–57.

[151] Two cases of monetary mismanagement on the part of sayyids mentioned in the *sīras* of the imam indicate that the central government swiftly reined in local ambitions; this of course does not mean that there was no public disapproval of such behaviour, it might have simply not been recorded. Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 2, ZA 561-01, ff. 102b, 174a.

[152] Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, f. 13a: *wa hādhihi-l-jiha quṭr min al-aqṭār farraqa [al-imām] ʿalayhā ʿasharat ālāf zabadī ṭaʿāman wa miʾat alf dīnār.*

learn that a common form of tax collection in kind was fodder (*qūt*) for the animals of traveling state officials.[153] In a case from a later period we find imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim collecting *zakāt al-mawāshī,* i.e. *zakāt* on livestock.[154] The scholar al-Muqrāʾī, a contemporary of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, claimed that the tribes paid two types of *zakāt* – a *zakāt al-dawla (zakāt* of the state) and a *zakāt li-l-ṭalaba wa-l-mustaḥiqqīn (zakāt* for students and those who deserve it).[155] If true, this would indicate that the original use of *zakāt* as a tax to be used for the benefit of the needy, was slowly shifting to make it a tax for the benefit of the functioning of the state. After it was collected, *zakāt* was delivered to the imam's residence in Thulā.[156] The collection and delivery of the *zakāt* was entrusted to officials of the imam, often scholars or sayyids. It is notable that not all revenue was delivered to the imam; local notables – sayyids, scholars and shaykhs – could keep parts of the collected revenue in local *buyūt al-amwāl.*[157]

Zakāt was not the only tax collected in Yemen in the Sharaf al-Dīn period. Another tax referred to as *al-fiṭra* in the narrative histories was originally an occasional tax also known as *ṣadaqat al-fiṭr* collected at the end of ramaḍān; in later Yemeni history it was transformed into a

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[153] Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, f. 37b: *ṭalab al-qūt li-kull khādim aw nāʾib.* This practice of combining payments in cash and kind can also be traced in the description of a *ʿahd* concluded in the Ottoman period by imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Dāwud al-Muʾayyadī with the people of Shahārat al-Faysh according to which he promised to build a local treasury and, as the author of his *sīra* explains, proceeded to prepare granaries (*madāfin*) in the area to fulfill his promise. Al-Lawzī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Nāṣir li-dīn allāh al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī,* NF B.35.ar, f. 104b.

[154] Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 122b.

[155] Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Muqrāʾī, *Maknūn al-sirr fī taḥrīr naḥārīr al-Sirr*, ed. Zayd b. ʿAlī al-Wazīr (McLean, VA: Markaz al-turāth wa-l-buḥūth al-yamanī, 2002), 73.

[156] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 2, ZA 561-01, f. 54b-55a.

[157] See for example a case from 960/1553 when the zakāt collected for Muṭahhar was entrusted for safe keeping to the shaykhs of al-Ahnūm. Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 50a. A later case is from the period of imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Dāwud al-Muʾayyadī, but it must be noted here that he was operating in different conditions, with significantly less support. Al-Lawzī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Nāṣir,* NF B.35.ar, f. 104b.

poll-tax.[158] For instance, the peace treaty of 929/1523 allowed the Ismāʿīlīs to collect and retain the *fiṭra.*[159] Given that the Ismāʿīlīs were allowed to collect it, it was still probably the occasional tax, rather than a poll-tax at the time.

Sources also refer to general *wājibāt* that possibly included a *kharāj* tax that is attested in Ottoman documents (but not mentioned in Sharaf al-Dīn sources), a *khums*-tax, and others.[160] The *khums* was a tax collected on territories that were previously under the control of opponents of the imam.[161] These forms of taxation seem to have been legitimized in the Sharaf al-Dīn period, since in subsequent periods they were treated as a traditional practice.[162] Finally, even though the sources I examined do not refer to it, there was a significant Jewish population in Yemen that would have contributed *jizya* payments to the imam's treasury.[163] Taken together, these taxes could provide a significant material base for the administrative and military development of the imamate.

The collection of taxes in the days of imam Yaḥya Sharaf al-Dīn was an affair that often required the personal presence of the imam, especially in the early years of the existence of his imamate. In 914/1508, the imam travelled to the market Sūq al-Majmāʿ which was frequented by the people of al-Ahnūm to collect taxes in person; since he travelled to a market, his taxes were collected in kind – grains (*ḥubūb*), raisins (*zabīb*) and grapes (*ʿinab*), wheat (*burr*).[164] In 929/1523

[158] Serjeant and al-ʿAmrī, "Administrative Organisation," 158.
[159] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 1424, 64.
[160] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar, f. 194b: *intasharat fīhā wulāt mawlānā … yaqbaḍūna al-wājibāt min al-quṭr wa-l-zakāwāt wa-l-akhmās wa-l-muṣārafāt.* I am not sure what is meant by *muṣārafa* here. I have not found attestations of *kharāj* collection in the Sharaf al-Dīn period. This tax was central to the Ottoman administration of Yemen.
[161] Serjeant and al-ʿAmrī, "Administrative Organisation," 155, 156.
[162] See for example a discussion of taxation in a letter of imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan (d. 1024/1615) addressed to members of the Āl Sharaf al-Dīn that mentions *al-wājibāt* as a general category and then specifies *zakāt*, *al-fiṭra,* and *khums*. Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF D.545.ar, f. 45b.
[163] Their economic contribution is better reflected in later, Ottoman documents.
[164] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar, f. 103a.

the imam personally travelled to the lands of the Banū Maṭar, specifically Bayt Radam, and held the local tribal leaders captive for four days until he was able to ensure that the taxes imposed on this region were collected.[165] If compared to the tribulations of tax collection in the times of al-Hādī ilā-l-ḥaqq, imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn had control over these procedures, and his authority in tax collection was unchallenged to such an extent that he could afford in later periods to out-source it to his agents.

The taxation rate could be negotiated. The tribes banū Shihāb and banū al-Ḥarath mentioned earlier in this chapter not only convinced the imam of the injustice of the appointed governor (*wālī*), but also renegotiated their tax load and ensured that it was recorded in documents (*khuṭūt*).[166] Parts of taxation revenue could remain in the hands of local ruling families, often of sayyid descent, even after the imam asserted his dominance over their territory. In one case, the *ashrāf* of Hadād in Qudam al-D-rwāh kept their income from certain taxes even while forced to relocate from their fortress to Ṣanʿāʾ.[167] But even though tribes and other parties could negotiate their terms with the imam,[168] there is no information on tribes being released from taxation, as happened in al-Hādī's time.[169]

As the imamate grew and the level of trust in the imam's government remained stable, tax collection was assigned to teams of two officials that usually included a sayyid and a qāḍī. An example of such a team is sayyid Yaḥyā b. ʿAbdallāh and qāḍī Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn Mirghim

[165] Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 247a.
[166] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 2, ZA 561-01, f. 37b.
[167] Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, ff. 42ab.
[168] Arendonk, *Les débuts de l'imāmat zaidite au Yémen*, 141–42. After receiving the allegiance of Najrān, imam al-Hādī went on a tour of the local villages and decided on taxation levels in consultation with local tribes. I have been unable to find a similar episode for the Sharaf al-Dīn period.
[169] Arendonk, 201.

who in 936/1530 collected taxes in Bilād Ānis and al-Hān.[170] As was mentioned earlier, travel for the purpose of tax collection is usually called *ṭiyāfa* in the sources, which is a direct indication of the itinerant character of the whole procedure. The *ṭiyāfa* also had an assessment component; the tax collectors were expected to make decisions on the amount of taxes to be taken. Occasionally, during the *ṭiyāfa* local populations were assessed to be too poor to provide any fixed tax payment.[171]

The *sīras* of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn imply that gifts in cash and kind to the imam provided another stream of income. This insistence is somewhat suspicious; one wonders, for example, whether wheat (*burr)* was indeed a present to the imam if it was already a regular component of tax collection[172] or whether this language of the sources that underlines the voluntary character of the property transfer attempts to cover up forms of additional taxation that would be harder to justify from a traditional Zaydi viewpoint. For example, a common category of "gifts" is *nudhūr,* votive offerings. This type of giving appears to be a form of required payment for the consideration of any petition addressed to the imam.[173] Gifts, however, went both ways, and the imam was also expected to show his generosity to those who travelled to meet with him.

This overview of the evidence we have to date on taxation in the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate points to several trends. Taxation increasingly came to the center of the imam's attention. Taxation

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[170] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 2, ZA 561-01, ff.12b-13a.
[171] Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, f. 15b: an indirect indication of this is a report from 936/1530 qāḍī Yaḥyā b. Ibrāhīm al-Nuṣayrī on the state of the people of Haddād; he wrote that they were too miserable and therefore a large military company was not necessary in the area (*ahl tilka al-jiha amruhum ḥaqīr lā yaḥtājūn* ilā istiqlāl makhraj kabīr)*. This was reported to the imam via his son Muṭahhar.
[172] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar, f. 100b. In 989/1581, members of the Sharaf al-Dīn family exchanged gifts that included grains (*ḥubūb*). Al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 447, f. 96.
[173] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar, f. 100b.

and income redistribution were key tools of legitimacy for the imamate and a space where it had to negotiate its interests with the tribes. It is very probable that in the Sharaf al-Dīn period the types of taxes collected changed and expanded to provide a better material base for the administrative and military necessities of the imam's government.

The army

Side by side an increasingly organized taxation system we expect to discover developments in the military sphere. At the heart of the Sharaf al-Dīn army stood the tribal component. Segments of tribes undertaking military duty were called *shafālīt* (sing. *shaflūt*) and could be posted to various locations outside the normal residence of the tribe. For instance, in 936/1530 the imam employed the *shafālīt* of Madhḥij, counting 200 men in the Ḥajja region.[174] Some of these appointments of military units to regions were seen by the tribes as a permission to plunder, as is exemplified in the behavior of the people of al-Ṭaraf during their appointment to fort al-ʿAlakī.[175] In addition to tribal militias, the imam relied on a regular, standing army that was called the *jund.* The size of the regular army was relatively small. In one case the number of military professionals who "had no other occupation" (*laysa lahum shughl*) amounted to one thousand men.[176]

Both the tribal units and the regular army included an infantry, a cavalry and musketeers.[177] A description of the military units under the command of Shams al-Dīn b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn in 932/1526 provides us with a glimpse of the elite components of the army – they had

[174] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 2, ZA 561-01, ff. 6b-7a.
[175] Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, ff. 156b-157a.
[176] Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-10, f. 90a.
[177] Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, f. 6a: *wa kān fīhi [Jabal al-ʿIrr] rutba kabīra khaylan wa rajlan wa banādiq.* The main source of muskets in Yemen in this period was the Mamluks who had previously raided the region and were now incorporated into the Sharaf al-Dīn army.

armor plates (*durūʿ*), conical hats (*ṭārāṭir*), swords (*suyūf*), decorated knives (*khanājir maḥluwwa*).[178] "Turkish guns" (*al-banādiq al-turkīya*) were part of the equipment, but larger artillery and canons were not yet accessible, so the army still used catapults (*manjanīq* and *ʿarārīd*) in sieges.[179]

Military command was shared, and in one instance there were three commanders in a single military unit – a shaykh and two faqīhs.[180] In addition, the Mamluks were incorporated into the army – in the sources they are known as *atrāk* or *turk.* There was also a slave component to the Sharaf al-Dīn army, presumably of African / Ethiopian descent. It seems that this part of the army was "inherited" by imam Sharaf al-Dīn from the Tahirids, who, according to some sources, commanded a group of Mamluks of Christian Ethiopian origin.[181] *ʿAbīd* in the army of Shams al-Dīn b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn are mentioned as early as 936/1530.[182] In some instances all of these components of the army were combined.[183] The army of Muṭahhar in 952/1545 consisted of Turks, *ʿabīd,* and Arabs (*ʿarab*), mixed together in a cavalry and musketeers' unit.[184] The African soldiers continued to serve members of the Sharaf al-Dīn family long after the disappearance of

[178] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar, f. 280b.
[179] Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, ff. 268a, 279b.
[180] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 2, ZA 561-01, f. 6a (concerning the same *rutba* in Jabal al-ʿUrr): *wa muqaddimūhum al-shaykh Wahhās b. ʿAlī al-ʿAnjarī* ... wa-l-faqīh Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. Ḥamīd wa-l-faqīh Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-ʿUlufī.*
[181] Porter, "The History and Monuments of the Tahirid Dynasty," 112.
[182] Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, f. 7a: *waṣala [Shams al-Dīn b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn] ... fī jamāʿat qalīlīn min al-atrāk wa-l-ʿabīd.* There is some difficulty in interpreting the exact meaning of the term *ʿabīd* in this context. It is most probably a designation of an ethnic group of Abyssinian or other African origin, but whether they were actually slaves is unclear from the sources. Porter, 39–40. I will leave this term untranslated.
[183] In rajab 936/ March 1530 the imam sent a group that included his *jund,* the Turks (*turk),* and *ʿabīd* to siege the fort al-Mikrām. Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, f. 89b.
[184] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 1424, 113.

the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate – in 1017/1608 when imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim sieged Kawkabān he had to fight against an army of *ʿabīd.*[185]

The military organization is often described by the term *maḥaṭṭa* which can be used to mean both military unit and military encampment. The organization of the *maḥaṭṭa* could be entrusted to an official different from the commanding officers. In one instance, a sayyid called Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. al-Hādī was responsible for the organization (*tadbīr*) of the *maḥaṭṭa* tasked with the siege of Kuḥlān Tāj al-Dīn, while sharing the responsibility for the military unit destined to encamp there.[186] The elaborate division of responsibilities indicates an increased professionalization within the military ranks, as does the fact that many military commanders had the title of *faqīh,* possibly demonstrating their high levels of literacy, which increasingly became requisite for military success.

The transformations of the government under imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn meant that a new leader of the state would have to spend more time and effort on administrative and military tasks. This came in conflict with the traditional Zaydi vision of the role of the imam and was acutely felt by imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn himself, who spent almost ten years trying to solve the issue of succession. Despite his efforts to ensure that the imamate continued to adhere to its ideal form, his state was inherited by a different type of ruler, his eldest son Muṭahhar.

[185] Ibn Luṭfallāh, 264. There is also a report of a revolt of *ʿabīd* against the Shams al-Dīns of Kawkabān in 965/1558. Due to the fact that ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh is the only source I have been able to find so far narrating these events it is difficult to assess the context in which this uprising happened. Ibn Luṭfallāh, 151–52.
[186] Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, ff. 47b, 88a. He commanded the tribal units of the *maḥaṭṭa.*

Yemen under Muṭahhar's rule

The question of succession ruined the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate. At the same time, it foreshadowed the need for competent rulers rather than qualified imams for the survival of the state in Yemen. One of the reasons why the succession question became such an issue in the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate is that the imam had nineteen sons from his ten marriages, most of whom had a role in his government. Trustworthy stakeholders were not easy to come by. Due to this a large proportion of administrative and military functions were entrusted to the imam's sons. They fulfilled several roles, especially as military commanders and administrative officials. The resulting state that imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn built was held together by the personal loyalty of the main stakeholders of the political project.

The two eldest sons of the imam Muṭahhar and Shams al-Dīn both had military appointments. We discussed earlier the career of Muṭahhar during the earliest period of territorial expansion of the imam. By 936/1530 he was both leading military campaigns and collecting taxes.[187] Shams al-Dīn was additionally responsible for *ṭiyāfa* (tax collection trips) and the assembly of hostages from conquered territories.[188] In 943/1536 they jointly led a campaign in Zabīd.[189] Another son of the imam, ʿIzz al-Dīn, was responsible for the financial administration of Ṣanʿāʾ; while the post did not have an official title he was described as the overseer of the *ʿummāl,* a function for which he was compensated with a tenth of the income of the *bayt al-māl*.[190] Additionally,

[187] Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, f. 9a: *thumma balaghat kutub ... al-sayyid al-mājid al-ṣadr al-mujāhid fakhr al-din al-Muṭahhar b. amīr al-muʾminīn fīhā taḥqīq akhbār al-jihāt al-ḥajjīya wa intiẓām aḥwāl ahlihā ... wa ṭalab nuzūl rajul wa khayl qad ʿayyanahā ilayhim li-qabḍ maṣāliḥ awdiyatihā wa mā ḥawlahā wa hādhihi-l-awdiya fīhā majāl li-l-khayl wāsiʿ fī istikhrāj al-ghanāʾim ... wa-l-manāfiʿ.*
[188] Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, f. 36b
[189] Kānī Çelebi, *Bughyat al-khāṭir wa nuzhat al-nāẓir,* NF E.391.ar, ff. 124ab.
[190] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, ZA 561-01, f. 102b: *huwa al-qāʾim yawmaʾidh fīhā [Ṣanʿāʾ] wa-l-mutawallī ʿalā umūrihā wa-l-nāẓim li-aʿmālihā wa-l-muqīm min*

Muṭahhar, Shams al-Dīn and ʿIzz al-Dīn were responsible for auditing the affairs of various regions.[191] All sons would regularly return to see their father in Thulā and to report on their activities.[192] The fact that the sons of the imam were integrated to such a great extent into the administration of the imamate inevitably complicated the question of succession.

The question of succession

The Zaydi tradition required that an imam be selected among eligible members of the Ahl al-Bayt. There was no tradition of dynastic transmission of power even if, as I show in chapter 4, successful imams made attempts to make their progeny their heirs. Imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn faced this problem on a greater scale, as his imamate included, as a result of his territorial expansion, a large non-Zaydi population (and elites) who were used to dynastic transmission of power and, quite possibly, preferred dealing with a dynasty than with the unpredictable and competing campaigns of multiple Zaydi contenders to the imamate. Moreover, parts of the Zaydi elite supported this point of view.

No definite indications survive of the decisions that were made on the question of succession in the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate in the early years. Nevertheless, Muṭahhar, the eldest son of the imam, appears from early on as the second most important person in the state. His position as future heir and head of the family was fixed in writing during the devastating plague of 933/1527, when imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn composed his first will. In it Muṭahhar was proclaimed both the

taḥta yadihi ʿummālahā … maʿa ḥiṣṣatihi allatī waḍaʿahā lahu wāliduhu ayyadahu allāh taʿālā min bayt al-māl fī muqābalat ḥifẓihi wa ḍabṭihi … wa hiya al-ʿushr minhu.

[191] Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, f. 102a, 104a (ʿIzz al-Dīn); 103b (Shams al-Dīn).

[192] See for example this description of a visit of Shams al-Dīn to Thulā: Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, f. 91a: *ṭalaʿa al-sayyid al-maqām al-sāmī al-shamsī Shams al-Dīn b. amīr al-muʾminīn min maḥrūsat Ṣanʿāʾ ilā al-ḥaḍra al-sharīfa … ilā maḥrūsat madīnat Thulā li-mufāwaḍat mushāfaha fī umūr mubāraka mimmā yataʿallaq bi-ṣalāḥ al-bilād wa-l-ʿibād.*

political heir of the imam.[193] Due to his connections to the tribes of Ḥajja (through his mother) as well as being a son of the imam and a talented military leader and governor, he was seen as a strong political figure. It is possible that the imam was even attempting to shape him to fit the standards of an imam. In 932/1526 Muṭahhar was undergoing instruction that could befit a future candidate for the imamate.[194] In addition to his scholarly obligations he had administrative responsibilities that required him to be present in meetings with the city elites (*majālis al-fuḍalāʾ*) and to keep track of local affairs. In 936/1530, the biographer of the imam dedicated several pages to extolling the deeds of Muṭahhar that brought order (*niẓām*) to the land, allowing religion and scholarship to flourish.[195] This description of the role of Muṭahhar made him suspiciously like the imam, so al-ʿUlufī had to provide an explanation of what the imam did in this setup. The only line that he could offer was metaphorical – the imam was like the sun that lights up the land.[196] He argued that the position of the imam was like the position of the Prophet and the role of Muṭahhar was

[193] Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, f. 264b: *jaʿaltu lahu wilāya ʿāmma.* The imam spent several pages of his will arguing for this decision (ff. 260b-264b) and highlighted the qualities of his son as a military leader and administrator. The legal foundation for this choice was argued through the reference to the concept of *muḥtasib* (f. 261a), the term itself is only used once. This will is not mentioned in either Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal's biography of the imam or ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh's chronicle. Moreover, al-Sharafī (and, by implication, the Āl al-Muʾayydī circle) did not know about this earliest will of the imam and did not mention it in his discussion of Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's rule. All this points to the possibility that the memory of this document was suppressed by later Sharaf al-Dīn historians.

[194] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar, f. 230a. Al-ʿUlufī reports that he was in Ṣanʿāʾ busy with study and conversations / debates with the ulama (*mulāzim li-l-ʿilm wa-l-ʿamal wa-l-mudhākara wa-murājaʿatihim fī jamīʿ al-ʿulūm al-maʿlūm minhā wa-l-maẓnūn).* Further on in this folio he writes that Muṭahhar was busy with study (*qirāʾa*) which leaves little doubt about the scholarly dimension of his endeavor.

[195] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 2, ZA 561-01, f. 34b: *wa ṣār al-ʿilm wa-l-dīn wa ahluhumā bi-him [Muṭahhar] ānisīn.*

[196] Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, ff. 35ab: *ḻā yakhfā ḍawʾ al-shams al-jalī al-ẓāhir illā ʿalā ʿamā al-qulūb wa-l-baṣāʾir wa laysa tajāhul al-jāhil wa-l-jāḥid al-kāfir li-shams nahār faḍlihi wa karāmātihi … amīr al-muʾminīn wa sayyid al-muslimīn wa khalīfat sayyid al-mursalīn al-Mutawakkil ʿalā-llāh rabb al-ʿālamīn Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn b. Shams al-Dīn b. amīr al-muʾminīn.*

that of a helper to the imam (*muʾayyid*) as ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib was to Muḥammad.[197] This remark indicates that the idea of Muṭahhar becoming the heir (hence the comparison to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib) was rather common among the elites of the imamate.

Muṭahhar did not shun demonstrating his special status. One staple of his routine was hunts; by 936/1530 he had a favorite location to which he would return for hunts even during military campaigns.[198] He is the only member of the Sharaf al-Dīn family who is described as a hunter. This appeal to a universal topos of kingship in Muṭahhar's case is innovative for Yemen, as we do not find any information on his father enjoying similar activities. Muṭahhar's search for a distinctive image as a leader laid bare the tension between the visions of the imam as a religious ruler providing charismatic legitimation to the regime and a more practical (and universal) concept of leadership. Even though evidence is scarce, this tension appears to have become increasingly clear to the imam. When his eyesight started to fail making him ineligible to hold the imamate according to tradition, he decided to promote another of his sons as leader.[199] Another reason why he might have started looking for a different heir was Muṭahhar's lameness, which is not reported in the earlier sources (al-ʿUlufī). However, if indeed it was Muṭahhar's impairment that was at the heart of the matter, then his brother Shams al-Dīn, an equally talented general and administrator, would have filled this role perfectly. However, the imam was looking for something altogether different.

His choice fell on one of his youngest sons, ʿAlī, from his marriage to *sharīfa* Maryam bint al-Hādī al-Ḥamzī al-Sulaymānī, and in 948/1541 he issued a proclamation appointing him his

[197] Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, f. 35b: *kamā ayyada jadduhu bi-jaddihi ʿAlī Muḥammadan.*
[198] Al-ʿUlufī, ZA 561-01, ff. 90b-91a.
[199] The reports on the decline in imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's eyesight are mentioned only in al-Sharafī. Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF D.545.ar, f. 41a.

heir.[200] This was not a coincidental choice; ʿAlī, born in 927/1521, twenty years younger than Muṭahhar and, consequently, less experienced in affairs of the state, boasted a fully sayyid pedigree and, through his mother's family, a connection to the powerful clans of Ṣanʿāʾ, among them descendants of a claimant to the imamate.[201] Perhaps, behind his promotion to the position of heir we can discern the thrust for power of the Ṣanʿāʾ sayyids and their opposition to the tribal elites who supported Muṭahhar.

Al-Zurayqī wrote of ʿAlī as the imam with a regal title (*al-imām al-murtaḍā li-dīn allāh*) even when his father was still alive, possibly on the orders of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn himself.[202] However, it emerged that despite his pedigree ʿAlī had a flaw – he had Sufi inclinations. Al-Sharafī, a later, Qasimid historian, reported that the young heir transmitted beliefs that were not compatible with the imamate (*ashyāʾ fī-l-ʿaqīda lā tuwāfiq al-aʾimma*).[203] This is quite possible, since several descendants of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn supported Sufism. We should remark here that this rumor, cited by al-Sharafī, comes from the Āl al-Muʾayyadī circle, and was joined to a

[200] Specifically, he assigned him a portion of the imamate and proclaimed that he had reached the qualifications for the imamate (*qad ʿalimnā kamālahu fī shurūṭ al-imāma*). al-Akwaʿ, *Hijar al-ʿilm wa-maʿāqiluhu fī-l-Yaman*, vol. 2, p. 801. Interestingly, ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh avoids the discussion of these events entirely by skipping the description of events of 948 and 949 in his chronicle. Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 1424, 111.

[201] They were the Banū Sulaymān of Wādiʿat Hamdān, a locality in the vicinity of Ṣanʿāʾ called after the powerful Wādiʿa tribal confederation. They were descendants of imam Ḥamza b. Abī Hāshim, and, more directly, the mother of ʿAlī was a descendant of al-Mahdī Idrīs b. ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī b. Wahhās, who claimed the imamate and was married into the Banū al-Wazīr family. Another relative of this family was imam al-Mutawakkil Muṭahhar b. Muḥammad b. Sulaymān (d. 879/1474), the grandfather of Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn. al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 1, pp. 808; 2, pp. 1843–45. *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 56b, 86a; *Rawḍat al-albāb,* NF B.18.ar, f. 33r (family tree).

[202] Al-Zurayqī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* ZA 238-03, f. 13. Unfortunately, the dating of this draft of the *sīra* of the imam is unclear; the *terminus post quem* for it might be 952/1546, based on internal references (see ff. 8, 22).

[203] Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 41a; citing a member of the extended Sharaf al-Dīn clan, who said that ʿAlī leaned towards Sufism (*kān yamīl ilā-l-taṣawwuf)* and the Ḥanafi madhhab. Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF D.545.ar, f. 31b.

claim that the imam looked to two members of the Āl al-Muʾayyad as potential heirs once he discovered the problems with ʿAlī.[204] This does not appear correct, since the 952/1545 *istikhlāf* (succession) statement makes it clear that ʿAlī was the imam's chosen heir.[205]

When the will of the imam concerning the appointment of ʿAlī as heir became known and was complicated by rumors of an impending arrest, Muṭahhar pushed the crisis into the open by challenging his father and going to war against him.[206] In light of this and in the face of the arrival of the Ottomans in the Yemeni highlands (see chapter 2), the 953/1546 will (*waṣīya*) of the imam reversed his earlier decisions of appointing a single heir and divided the imamate into three parts between Muṭahhar, his brother Shams al-Dīn, and their half-brother ʿAlī.[207] Moreover, some sources claim that the imam eventually forgave Muṭahhar and gave him his approval (*riḍā*) to rule in 954/1547.[208] After the imam arrived at an agreement with Muṭahhar he stepped down from all state affairs and moved to Kawkabān with Shams al-Dīn. Sources do not state this openly, but he had probably lost his eyesight entirely around this time.[209] He died in Kawkabān in 965/1558.

Despite the agreements between the imam and his son, internal strife continued to plague the Sharaf al-Dīn family and was further aggravated by the Ottoman military campaigns in which members of the family joined the Ottoman side to exact vengeance on their relatives. The factionalism of Yemeni elites can be potentially traced in the split within the family of the imam himself; his ex-heir ʿAlī sided with Muṭahhar, while Muṭahhar's full brother, Shams al-Dīn, remained by

[204] Al-Sharafī, NF D.545.ar, f. 41a.
[205] Al-Sharafī, NF D.545.ar, ff. 31ab.
[206] The full text of this document (referred to as an *istikhlāf* and an addendum to a *waṣīya* of the imam that I have not yet been able to discover) is cited in al-Sharafī, NF D.545.ar, ff. 31ab. Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 1424, 113.
[207] Al-Sharafī, NF D.545.ar, f. 33a; Ibn Luṭfallāh, 119–20.
[208] Al-Sharafī, NF D.545.ar, f. 31a.
[209] See fn. 199 above.

the side of the imam.[210] ʿIzz al-Dīn also attempted to switch sides, but was captured by the Ottomans in 954/1547 and died as a prisoner in Yanbuʿ in 955/1548 on his way to Istanbul.[211] The disintegration of family unity was considered by their descendants as equivalent to the downfall of the Zaydi state.[212] The resulting divisions among the sons of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn eventually led to the downfall of his political project.

What type of ruler was Muṭahhar?

As is visible in the shifts in his titles, Muṭahhar is one of the most controversial political figures of the Sharaf al-Dīn period. As we remarked earlier, initially he was styled heir apparent. One indication of this rise to power is that he received a regnal title, *al-nāṣir li-dīn allāh*.[213] Even without substantive research on titles in Zaydi Yemen in this period we can speculate that this was a major political gesture, especially since contemporaneous sources flag this. The goal of this action was probably to highlight the important role that Muṭahhar played in the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate. Sources produced in the Āl al-Muʾayyad circle, as well as al-ʿUlufī, assigned Muṭahhar another honorific title, *fakhr al-dīn.*[214] These titles Muṭahhar did not lose even during the conflict with the imam. It is, however, the question of his title after the conflict that is most intriguing.

One evident place to start would be to trace some documents from Muṭahhar's chancery or works produced under his patronage. However, no such sources survive. Moreover, no biography, like the *sīras* of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, was produced in his circle. This might indicate that

[210] Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 41b. Later, Shams al-Dīn even joined forces with Özdemir to fight against Muṭahhar. Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF D.545.ar, f. 31a.
[211] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 1424, 129–32, 136.
[212] Ibn Luṭfallāh, 114.
[213] *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, f. 81a.
[214] Ibn al-Muʾayyad, *al-Tuḥfa,* NF D. 451.ar, ff. 137b, 142b; al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 2, ZA 561-01, f. 9a.

Muṭahhar did not in fact define himself as an imam, a religious leader with administrative and military responsibilities, nor as a 'restricted' imam (*muḥtasib*),[215] but rather as a ruler more akin to the Rasulids and the Tahirids, who patronized religious institutions but did not engage in leading them. This might also be an indication that there was a consensus in Zaydi intellectual circles until the Ottoman period that only a recognized imam could be eulogized in a *sīra.* This could make this genre of historical writing an indicator of the status of a ruler.

Despite the absence of a *sīra,* Muṭahhar was nevertheless the highest authority in Yemen, and was recognized as such by Yemenis and Ottomans. The sources that provide the greatest insight into the position of Muṭahhar and the type of ruler that he was, are Ottoman works. *Mühimme* records use the title *shaykh al-ʿarab.*[216] The author of *Bulūgh al-marām* in a negative depiction of Muṭahhar referred to him as *malik al-firqa al-zaydīya,* "king of the Zaydi sect", a title that would sound strange to any member of the Zaydi educated class but was probably reflective of the actual state of affairs. ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh, writing at the court of the Ottoman governor in Ṣanʿāʾ, when narrating events following the death of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn in his chronicle refers to his grandfather Muṭahhar as caliph, *khalīfa*.[217] Finally, al-Duʿāmī, writing in Āl Shams al-Dīn – pro-

[215] The concept of 'restricted imam' (translation suggested by B. Haykel in Bernard Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muhammad al-Shawkānī*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilisation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 7.) was developed in Zaydi thought since the days of imam al-Manṣūr al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm al-Rassī. Interestingly, the restriction, according to al-Muḥallī's *Naṣīḥat al-wulā* included a prohibition on military action. al-Muḥallī, *Naṣīḥat al-wulā al-hādiya ilā-l-najā,* NF D.542.ar, f. 62b. Muṭahhar's military campaigns against the Ottomans, in this logic, were a violation of his position as *muḥtasib.* It is perhaps this discrepancy between theory and historical reality that made it hard for Zaydi historians to classify this political figure in their works. Another term that was sometimes used was *muqtaṣid,* "the mediator". Rudolf Strothmann, *Das Staatsrecht der Zaiditen*, vol. 1, Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Orients. Zwanglose Beihefte zu der Zeitschrift "Der Islam." Herausgegeben von C.H. Becker (Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1912), 94–98.
[216] MD 7, #611.
[217] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 1424, 152.

Ottoman – circles, spoke of Muṭahhar respectfully as "king of the Arabs" (*malik al-ʿarab*) or "the victorious king" (*al-malik al-nāṣir*), mixing his Zaydi regnal title and the titles of Rasulid rulers of Yemen.[218] It is probably not a coincidence that the only source that provides a full title for Muṭahhar and calls him an imam is an obituary preserved in a copy of a work of imam al-Mahdī Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā Ibn al-Murtāḍā copied on the orders of ʿAbd al-Mughnī b. Yaḥyā al-Nuṣayr, the son of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's most prolific administrator, in 967/1560.[219] The manuscript in question later belonged to the Ottoman governor Jaʿfar Pasha and is now part of the Topkapı Palace Library collection. In this book, that was produced in pro-Ottoman Yemeni Zaydi circles, the obituary of Muṭahhar includes the following titles – *al-malik al-nāṣir li-l-ḥaqq… fakhr al-dīn imām al-dunyā … al-imām ibn al-imām,* i.e. "king victorious for truth … pride of faith, imam of the world … imam son of the imam."[220] The only title that is conspicuously absent in this list is "commander of the faithful," *amīr al-muʾminīn.* The selection of titles listed here might indicate an attempt to distance oneself from Zaydi forms of legitimation and to appeal also to more general Islamic forms of legitimacy that did not rely on concepts of sayyid rule.

The absence of a separate biography in the "chain" of imams comes in sharp contrast with the factual evidence we have of Muṭahhar as the leader of Zaydi Yemen. After the conclusion of the agreement of 952/1545 with his father he proceeded to mint his own coins.[221] This bold policy was probably connected to the arrangement that left him in control of all treasuries (*buyūt al-amwāl*) in Yemen, as the imam set aside his responsibilities due to his illness that disqualified his

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[218] Al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 477, ff. 105, 145.
[219] Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā Ibn al-Murtaḍā, *Al-Munya wa-l-amal sharḥ al-Milal wa-l-Nihal,* TSMK A 1868. The copyist Qāsim b. Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad's statement is dated shaʿbān 967 / and mentions the patronage (*ʿināya*) of ʿAbd al-Mughnī b. Yaḥyā b. Ibrāhīm al-Nuṣayr (f. 91a). Ownership of Jaʿfer Pasha is mentioned on the title page (f. 2a).
[220] TSMK A 1868, f. 91a.
[221] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 1424, 121.

from leadership (*saqaṭa ʿannī al-taklīf*).[222] We know that Muṭahhar had an administration of his own, headed by qāḍī al-Hādī al-Tawhamī, who oversaw, for example, an operation of producing 80 letters to the tribes calling them to support Muṭahhar and a letter to the Ottoman governor Üways Pasha, inviting him to form an alliance.[223] There was continuity between the administration of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn and that of Muṭahhar. For example, *faqīh* Ṣalāḥ b. Dāwūd b. Dāʿir, the author of another (currently lost) *sīra* of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Din, served Muṭahhar, in particular during negotiations with Özdemir Pasha for the peace treaty of 955/1548.[224] Another example is *faqīh* Yaḥyā b. Ibrāhīm al-Nuṣayr(ī) who continued to command military forces on behalf of Muṭahhar in 956/1549.[225] This indicates that despite the conflict between the imam and his son that was further aggravated by internal family divisions, some continuity of administration was preserved between the regimes.

Muṭahhar's rule and the fading of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate

Muṭahhar ruled over diminishing Sharaf al-Dīn domains for three decades. The greatest challenge to his authority came from the Ottomans who in the 950s/1540s started a more active phase of conquest in Yemen. The first years of Muṭahhar's independent rule (952-959/1545-1552) were spent in incessant fighting against Özdemir Pasha. Eventually, due to the arrival of Muṣṭafā

[222] *Waṣīyat al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn* in al-Sharafī*, al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* vol. 3, NF D.545.ar, f.33a.
[223] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 1424, 117. This *nisba* is not known to al-Maqḥafī, however, three other people with the same *nisba* appear in Zaydi sources: a *faqīh* ʿAlī b. ʿAbdallāh who served imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn in 936-939/1530-33 (al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 2, ZA 561-10, f. 157b; al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 40b), a *faqīh* Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān who lived in the times of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim (al-Sharafī, NF C.101.ar, f. 133b), and the owner of a manuscript now in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana (NF B.89.ar), ʿAlī b. ʿAbdallāh al-Tawhamī (d. 1185/1771, based on a marginal note in NF F.234.ar, f. 21a).
[224] Ibn Luṭfallāh, 133.
[225] Ibn Luṭfallāh, 137.

Nashshār Pasha, who brought offers of peace from the Ottoman sultan, the war ceased and a mode of co-existence with the Ottomans was established. The following decade Muṭahhar spent in a status of vassal ruler to the Ottoman sultan, renewing the peace treaty with each successive governor.[226] His capital was Thulā, a fort overlooking the Ṣanʿāʾ plain, one of the first captured by his father and imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's former capital.

This situation was interrupted in 973/1566. That year, the envoy of the governor Riḍwān Pasha, according to ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh, misrepresented the reaction of Muṭahhar to the offered renewal of the peace accords.[227] As a result, the governor attacked Muṭahhar, who likewise resumed military actions against the Ottomans. This time the Zaydi ruler was more successful and captured Ṣanʿāʾ from the Ottomans in Ṣafar 975/August 1567. The account of the entrance of Muṭahhar into the city is one of the few descriptions of a public ceremony during his time. His grandson ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh reported that he entered the city in a military parade, prayed at the Great Mosque and recited from the Qur'an in it, and then headed to the Ghumdān castle, the residence of the Ottoman governors.[228] This description suggests that Muṭahhar was combining elements of Zaydi authority with elements of Ottoman legitimation. The Zaydi elements can be seen in the reverence for the Great Mosque and the effort to assert leadership in religious terms.[229] The Ottoman element is visible in the choice of residence. Imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn had not made Ghumdān his residence and had remained outside Ṣanʿāʾ throughout his rule. Muṭahhar's decision to stay in the city indicates a perceptible break from this tradition. Within a year Muṭahhar reestablished his authority

[226] For example, in 968/1561 he renewed the agreement with Maḥmūd Pasha. Ibn Luṭfallāh, 157.
[227] Ibn Luṭfallāh, 161–64.
[228] Ibn Luṭfallāh, 173.
[229] Alternatively, both gestures can be interpreted in a neutral, non-Zaydi key as indicators of standard support for Muslim faith by a ruler.

across Yemen, relying on the help of his son Luṭfallāh and members of the Shawīʿ family of the Āl al-Ḥamza.[230]

The success of Muṭahhar's actions precipitated a severe Ottoman reaction. The first success in reining in the Zaydis corresponded with the efforts of ʿUthmān Özdemir Pasha and was furthered during Koca Sinān Pasha's expedition of 976-78/1569-71 (discussed in chapter 2). After two years of exhausting fighting, in Shaʿbān 978 / January 1571, Koca Sinān Pasha concluded a peace with Muṭahhar that allowed him to retain control over the northern regions – Ṣaʿda, al-Ẓāhir, Khawlān, and Dhimarmar, including their forts.[231] This peace treaty dealt the final blow to Muṭahhar's efforts to maintain his father's domains, even though he retained control over substantial regions. The Ottoman governors now controlled key territories, including Ṣanʿāʾ, and maintained treaties with powerful sayyid clans. Even among the ranks of Muṭahhar's supporters there was a feeling that he was not as powerful as before; in 980/1572 his appointee to al-Ahnūm, ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Jaḥḥāf, rebelled against him.[232] Shortly after this rebellion was dealt with, Muṭahhar died. At his burial, the great Sharaf al-Dīn clan came together for the last time in a pompous procession that included a military parade, only to disperse afterwards.[233]

The disintegration of the Sharaf al-Dīn domain that started in the 950s/1540s and was stopped by the great effort of Muṭahhar now sped out of control. The sons of Muṭahhar, the clan of his brother Shams al-Dīn, and the Āl al-Muʾayyad divided what remained of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate. ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh selected a line from al-Buḥturī (d. 284/897) to capture this sentiment of

[230] In particular he relied on the brothers ʿAlī and Qāsim al-Shawīʿ. Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 1424, 173.
[231] Ibn Luṭfallāh, 190.
[232] Ibn Luṭfallāh, 195–96.
[233] Ibn Luṭfallāh, 196–97.

division: "they dispersed as branches, so each tribe had a commander of the faithful and a pulpit."[234] Indeed, with Muṭahhar's death the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate came to a definitive end.

Conclusion

The imamate of Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn introduced many innovations in Yemen. For the first time in Yemeni history, a Zaydi polity was controlling both Upper and Lower Yemen and their Zaydi and non-Zaydi populations.[235] Using a window of opportunity offered to him by the Mamluk raids of Yemen, imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, who spent the first twenty years of his rule in the forts of Ḥajja, at war with Ṣaʿda's al-Muʾayyadī imams, the Ismāʾīlīs, and the Tahirids, was able to capture Ṣanʿāʾ. As the Mamluks dealt the final blow to the southern Tahirid rulers, the imam filled in the power vacuum, relying on the talents of his sons and a network of supporters among the tribes and powerful sayyid clans.

The size of this new polity required substantive adjustments of administrative and military practices; as a result, the Sharaf al-Dīn period saw an increased reliance on trained professionals in combination with wide authority given to members of the imam's family. The imam himself increasingly found it impossible to control all decision-making. The tension between the new

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[234] *Wa-tafarraqū shuʿaban fa-kull qabīlatin / fīhā amīru l-muʾminīna wa-minbaru*. Ibn Luṭfallāh, 197.

[235] A cultural development related to the relocation of the center of the state in Yemen to the northern highlands is the flourishing of local *ḥumaynī* poetry that, as Lambert remarks, started as a Rasulid phenomenon but became popular in northern (Zaydi) contexts at the courts of Zaydi rulers. Indeed, the *sīras* of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn (al-ʿUlufī and al-Zurayqī) contain some of the earliest examples of *muwashshaḥ,* a genre of *ḥumaynī,* that Lambert dates to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, composed by Zaydi literati in honor of the imam. This is also noted by Klaric, who links it specifically (though without providing evidence) to Muṭahhar's reign. Lambert, *La médecine de l'âme*, 75–77; Tomislav Klarić, "Untersuchungen zur politischen Geschichte der Qāsimidischen Dynastie (11./17. Jh.)" (PhD Dissertation, Göttingen, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, 2007), 82.

reality, in which the imam had to dedicate more time to administrative matters, and the ideal in which he was the religious leader as well was deepened during the succession crisis, itself a novelty in Zaydi Yemen as at no previous point in Zaydi history did an imam make such consistent efforts to determine an heir.

As a result of the struggle of the 950s/1540s a new type of Zaydi ruler rose to power – one that did not rely on religious authority in framing his legitimacy. To later observers he appeared as the "king of the Arabs" and a Zaydi ruler who claimed no religious authority. We will never know whether the new model suggested by Muṭahhar would have survived in the long run. Due to the Ottoman conquest, what remained under his control of the Sharaf al-Dīn polity continuously shrank and eventually the imamate came to an end with his death.

The realization that the Zaydi political system was undergoing transformation, possibly an irreversible one, was grasped by one of the authors of the family history *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* who complained about the imams' attention to administration rather than scholarship.[236] The imams were expected to find a balance, once elected to lead the community, between scholarship and administrative tasks. For the author of *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* the difference between past imams and new imams is in the way they balance the two components of their "professional life." He writes: "it was the tradition (*ʿāda*) of the imams that the *daʿwa* and the engagement in *jihād* did not prevent them from the spread of sciences and writing of books of guidance (*hidāya*) and merit (*faḍl*) ... unlike the *duʿāt* of this time who separate these in order to only occupy themselves with taxes (*al-wājibāt*) and the collection of *zakāt."*[237] The complaint voiced about the preoccupation

[236] A further analysis of the layers of the text is necessary to establish whether this complaint should be attributed to al-Hādī al-akbar or his descendant who completed the history in 983/1575.
[237] *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, f. 107b.

of rulers with taxes demonstrates the rise of the fiscal state with a developed administrative branch, in which there was now no place for the scholar-imam. This tension, as is shown below (chapter 3), resurfaced in the Qasimid period.

Chapter 2. The Ottoman century in Yemen, 1538-1635

Between 1535 and 1638 Yemen was a province of the Ottoman Empire. The period of Ottoman rule in Yemen coincided with a time of deep structural transformation in Ottoman institutions and administrative practices, and, at the same time, of the Ottoman Empire's geopolitical vision. The transformations playing out in the imperial center had a direct influence on the changing approach to provincial rule in Yemen. The key theme of the Ottoman century in Yemen is the balancing between two opposite visions of a Yemeni policy: one deeply connected to Egypt, the other – independent of it. Early clashes over this core policy question develop already during the first phase of Ottoman expansion in Yemen. The decision to pursue an independent Yemeni policy became the default political line during a later phase, which culminated in 'the golden age' of Ottoman Yemen. The eventual reorientation towards Egypt was a necessity considering the diminishing interest of the metropole in directing Yemeni (or other distant provincial) affairs. It resulted in a relocation of the decision-making authority from Istanbul to Cairo, a center that had its own vision of Red Sea geopolitics and Yemen's place in it. Due to its concern with trade, especially in increasingly valuable coffee, Egypt disregarded internal Yemeni affairs. This led to the disintegration of Ottoman rule in the region and the transfer of local power to the Qasimid imamate. Nevertheless, the presence of the Ottoman Empire in this region resulted in the appearance of institutions and governance practices that influenced the subsequent development of the Zaydi imamate in Yemen.

Conquest (1525-1547)

Name	In office	Notes

Amīr Behrām	945-946/1538-40	In Aden
Amīr Muṣṭafā ʿIzzet[1]	945-946/1538-40	Former sanjaqbey of Gaza, sanjaqbey of Zabīd[2]
Muṣṭafā Nashshār Pasha	946-952/1540-45	
Üweys Pasha	952-954/1546-47	

Table 1. The first Ottoman governors of Yemen

The Ottoman conquest of Yemen took two decades to complete. After the conquest of Egypt in 1517, the Empire was looking towards the Hijaz and the Red Sea with two goals in mind. First, there was the concern for the security of this area due to Portuguese incursions.[3] Second, there was a push to expand in the economic markets of the spice trade. With these goals in mind, the Ottoman conquest of Yemen and the early Ottoman policy in the region was focused on the island of Kamarān off the coast of Yemen and the Lower Yemen regions, especially the Tihāma and Aden.

The earliest Ottoman document affirming these geopolitical goals is a report attributed to the Ottoman admiral Selman Reis composed in 931/1525. The report focuses on Zabīd and Taʿizz, which it characterizes as a rich agricultural region, and mentions Lower Yemen localities such as Ibb, Jibla, Radāʿ, Miqrānah, and Dhamār. The northernmost region that the author of the report

[1] The name of the amīr includes ʿIzzet only in ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh. ʿĪsā Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ fī mā ḥadatha baʿd al-miʾa al-tāsiʿa min al-fitan wa-l-futūḥ*, ed. Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad al-Maqḥafī (Ṣanʿāʾ: Markaz ʿAbbādī li-l-dirāsāt wa-l-nashr, 1424), 109.

[2] Al-Nahrawālī, our main pro-Ottoman source on this period, remarks that he did not receive the title of pasha or beylerbey of Yemen. I have not been able to find any documents to support this. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī fī al-fatḥ al-ʿuthmānī: tārīkh al-Yaman fī al-qarn al-ʿāshir al-hijrī maʿa tawassuʿ fī akhbār ghazawāt al-jarākisa wa-l-ʿuthmānīyīn li dhalik al-quṭr*, ed. Aḥmad al-Jāsir, Nuṣūṣ wa abḥāth jughrāfīya wa tārīkhīya ʿan jazīrat al-ʿarab 6 (Riyāḍ: Dār al-Yamāma li-l-baḥth wa-l-tarjama wa-l-nashr, 1967), 93.

[3] The expansion of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean was a concern shared by the Mughals, Tahirids and Egyptian Mamluks. Aḥmed Rāshid Pasha, *Tārīkh-i Yemen ve Ṣanʿāʾ* (Istanbul: Basiret Matbaası, 1291), vol. 1, pp. 15–17.

mentions is Ṣanʿāʾ (Ṣanʿān in the document).[4] The port of Aden is in the eyes of the report an area separate from Lower Yemen, even though, as it remarks, it takes only two days overland to travel from Zabīd to Aden.[5] Interestingly, the 1525 report claims that Yemen "has no ruler" and is "an empty province", i.e. empty of authority.[6] Another report, from 932/1526, focusing on the Red Sea, Arabia, and the Indian Ocean echoes this pre-conquest knowledge of the situation in Yemen.[7] The compiler provided a list of Yemeni regions and the names of associated rulers, whom he called beys. There are many misspellings in the document, an indication of the unfamiliarity of this geographical region to the compiler.[8] The focus is clearly on Zabīd – a region in Yemen's Tihāma bordering the Red Sea that the author identified as of key importance to the Ottoman administration. The document, despite its Lower Yemen and maritime focus, lists the name of the "bey" of the Ṣanʿān (meaning, Ṣanʿāʾ) region – Sharaf al-Dīn b. Sharīf – clearly the imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, which makes it the earliest Ottoman document to take note of a Zaydi imam. Taken together these reports demonstrate that the Ottoman interest in Yemen in this period was strongly connected to their ideas of establishing a stronger presence on the Red Sea and Indian Ocean.

The encroachment of the Ottomans on Yemen started shortly after the composition of these documents. By the end of 1526 an Ottoman expedition was sent to Yemen from Egypt. The goals

[4] Salih Özbaran, "A Turkish Report on the Red Sea and the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean (1525)," *Arabian Studies* 4 (1978): 84. This article contains a translation into English of the document TSMA.e.757/62 (old catalogue number: TSMA.e.6455).
[5] Özbaran, 85.
[6] Özbaran, 84.
[7] TSMA.d.9632, f. 2b, the segment of the report dedicated to the affairs of the vilayet of Zabīd.
[8] For example, Radāʿ lost the final "ʿayn", Taʿizz is spelled "Taʿyiz", and Ṣanʿāʾ is called "Ṣanʿān". TSMA.d.9632, f. 2b.

of the Ottomans were, as was to be expected, limited to the coastal regions.[9] The initial success of the Ottoman incursions led by Selman Reis was, however, soon reversed. In fact, for the next ten years, the Ottomans neglected Yemen and did not attempt to further their presence there. The attempt of amīr Muṣṭafā to capture Taʿizz in 946/1539 demonstrated in full the difficulties of northward expansion. Even though pro-Ottoman sources claim that he captured the town and installed his own governor (*ḥākim*), ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh clarifies that in fact the Zaydi administration of Taʿizz installed by imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn simply moved out of town to Jabal Taʿkar for the period of the attack, confronted Ottoman raiders in the rural areas nearby and even captured the artillery used in the siege.[10] After the withdrawal of Ottoman forces, the governor of Taʿizz appointed by the imam, faqīh Yaḥyā al-Nuṣayrī, returned to his post.

The breakthrough in the Ottoman conquest of Yemen came about during the governorship of Üweys Pasha. This governor first took Taʿizz in 953/1546, and then launched a campaign to conquer the territories further north. His general (*serdār*), the future governor of Yemen, Özdemir Pasha, led a military force towards Ṣanʿāʾ. Despite the distraction of a rebellion led by a former Mamluk officer Ḥasan Pehlivān in June-July 1547, during which Üweys Pasha was assassinated, Özdemir proceeded with his plan to conquer Ṣanʿāʾ. His eventual success was not incidental; he was significantly aided by the political disagreements within the family of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, discussed in the previous chapter. As a result of Özdemir's campaign, the Ottomans established a presence in Ṣanʿāʾ and Ṣaʿda within a year, and the Zaydi lords of the northern highlands,

[9] Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (Oxford / New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 44.
[10] A realistic description of the event: al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 93. A clarification from the Zaydi side: Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 110. The Ottoman version, through a translation of al-Nahrawālī: Yavuz Hulûsi, *Yemen'de Osmanlı idâresi ve Rumûzî târihi (923-1012/1517-1604)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2003), vol. 1, pp. xcvi–xcvii.

previously allied with imam Yaḥyā, turned to this new center of power. The Ottoman expansion to Ṣanʿāʾ and Ṣaʿda under Özdemir can be thus considered the final step of the conquest.

Patterns of Yemeni history in the medieval and early modern period demonstrate that control over Ṣanʿāʾ was crucial to successful control of the Upper Yemen highlands.[11] If we compare previous regime expansions in Yemen, we see that the twenty years that it took the Ottomans to move from Lower to Upper Yemen are a typical result for a pre-industrial state. This upward expansion was never easy for polities established in the coastal regions of the peninsula.

The first attempt to conquer Yemen from Egypt, undertaken by the Ayyubids, was swift up to Taʿizz and the Dhamār plain, but capturing Ṣanʿāʾ took approximately twenty years.[12] Due to lack of control further north, the Ayyubid hold on the city was regularly under attack. Even though the heirs of the Ayyubids, the Rasulids, were able to install a governor of their own in Ṣanʿāʾ in the first century of their rule over Yemen, their control over these areas was illusory.[13] Once the Rasulids definitively reoriented towards the coastal regions, the city and the northern highlands were lost to them.[14] From then and until the arrival of the Ottomans, regimes based in southern Yemen had a hard time controlling the highlands. The successors of the Rasulids, the Tahirids, who came to power in 858/1454, took a decade just to attempt to conquer Ṣanʿāʾ. Their 866/1461-62 success, however, held for only three years. After that it took the Ṭahirids another

[11] Sayyid Muṣṭafā Sālim, *al-Fatḥ al-ʿuthmānī al-awwal li-l-Yaman. 1538-1635*, 1st ed. (Cairo: Maʿhad al-buḥūth wa-l-dirāsāt al-ʿarabīya, 1969), 175.
[12] The Ayyubid conqueror of Yemen Ṭūrānshāh conquered the lowlands of Yemen in 569/1173. It was only the second ruler of this dynasty, Ṭughtakīn, who established his own governor in Ṣanʿāʾ in 585/1189-90. G. Rex Smith, "Early and Medieval History of Ṣanʿāʾ, ca. 622-953/1515," in *Ṣanʿāʾ: An Arabian Islamic City* (London: Melisende, 2013), 61.
[13] As demonstrated in Mahoney's history of state control of Yemen's central highlands. Daniel Edward Mahoney, "The Political Landscape of the Dhamar Plain in the Central Highlands of Yemen during the Late Medieval and Early Ottoman Periods" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Chicago, The University of Chicago, 2014), 84–90.
[14] Smith, "Early and Medieval History of Ṣanʿāʾ, ca. 622-953/1515," 65.

thirty years, till 910/1504, to launch a second expedition towards Ṣanʿāʾ. This new attack was more successful and were it not for the Mamluk incursion into Yemen, perhaps, the Tahirids could have expanded their control further.[15] The Mamluk expedition to Yemen that came directly before the Ottoman conquest was incredibly swift. It took them only two years to sweep victoriously from Kamaran Island up to Ṣanʿāʾ, dismantling the Tahirid regime along the way. Compared to the Mamluks, the Ottomans come across as slow, however, this is a superficial comparison. The Mamluk campaign in Yemen resembled a raid for plunder more than an organized conquest and was aided by two factors. Firstly, the Mamluks were the first to bring firearms to Yemen, which secured them a lasting surprise factor in battle.[16] Secondly, they came at fortunate time when the Tahirids had alienated most of the *ashrāf* (sing. *sharīf,* descendants of the Prophet) of the highlands through arrests and exile.

The success of the Ottoman conquest is closely connected to the fact that it was qualitatively different. Unlike the Mamluks, they were interested in establishing permanent control over Upper Yemen. Moreover, they had means to stabilize their regime in newly conquered regions that were unparalleled in comparison to previous regimes expanding into the Yemeni highlands. During the almost hundred years separating the conquest of Constantinople (1453) from the conquest of Ṣanʿāʾ and with it of Yemen (1547), a complex fiscal-military imperial system had developed in the Ottoman heartlands and the imperial elites had gained extensive experience in flexible approaches to integrating various conquered territories into the empire.[17] The result was that the

[15] Smith, 66–67; Mahoney, "The Political Landscape of the Dhamar Plain in the Central Highlands of Yemen during the Late Medieval and Early Ottoman Periods," 94.
[16] R. B. Serjeant, "The Post-Medieval and Modern History of Ṣanʿāʾ and the Yemen, ca.953-1382/1515-1962," in *Ṣanʿāʾ: An Arabian Islamic City*, ed. R. B. Serjeant and Ronald Lewcock (London: Melisende, 2013), 68–69.
[17] Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 74–93.

conqueror who reached the Zaydi highlands, for the first time in Yemeni history, accepted local religious diversity and was attentive to local power structures, extending alliances to the Shāfiʿī, Ismāʿīlī and Zaydi elites in equal measure. The Ottomans, who at the time were only beginning to develop strong confessionalization in the face of the war with the Safavids, were conquering Zaydi lands not as Sunnis eradicating a Shiʿite sect, but as tolerant conquerors, more concerned with the security of the Hijaz and the Red Sea in the face of Portuguese expansion and with the building of alliances on the ground. This flexibility towards diversity distinguished them sharply from the Tahirids and their predecessors.

Building an Ottoman province (1547-1569)

The successful incursion into the northern highlands altered the Ottoman view of the structure of Yemen. If previously their focus was on the Tihāma and the maritime trade potential that it held, the conquest of Ṣanʿāʾ made it clear that Yemen had more to offer than its littoral. In his *Fetḥnāme,* composed shortly after the victory in the highlands, Özdemir suggested that Yemen fell into three parts: (1) the "southern regions" with a potential center in Zabīd, (2) the "middle regions" with a center in Taʿizz and extending towards Aden, and (3) the Upper Yemen regions, stretching all the way to Ṣaʿda, with a potential center in Ṣanʿāʾ.[18] Though his vision of three provinces in Yemen was not fulfilled, a comparison of the localities that he lists in his *Fetḥnāme* to Ottoman financial documents of the later period demonstrates that most strategic goals that he set out were fulfilled.

[18] Richard J. Blackburn, "The Ottoman Penetration of Yemen: An Annotated Translation of Özdemür Bey's *Fetḥnāme* for the Conquest of Ṣanʿāʾ in rajab, 945 / August, 1547," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 6 (1980): 87–88.

In this first period of building an Ottoman province in Yemen, however, the Ottoman administration resided in uncomfortable vicinity to the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate, led by Muṭahhar b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn. This limited the extent of Ottoman operations. Moreover, early attempts to structure control over the province were stalled by internal Ottoman conflicts over authority. The greatest danger came from the ambitions of the Ottoman elites in Egypt. Three governors in this period – Ferhād Pasha, Muṣṭafā Nashshār Pasha, and Maḥmūd Pasha – had strong connections to Egypt's governor Dāʾūd Pasha (in office 1538-49). Even after Dāʾūd Pasha's death, the governor of Egypt was often held responsible for some components of Yemeni policy, especially anything that pertained to the maintenance of Egyptian military units in Yemen.[19] The difficulties of developing an independent Yemeni policy and the failure of the Ottoman regime to balance out different Ottoman and local interest groups led to the decline of Ottoman power in Yemen by the late 1560s.

Name	**Dates in power**	**Notes**
Ferhād Pasha	954-956/1548-49	Protégé of Dāʾūd Pasha
Özdemir Pasha	956-962/1549-54	Circassian Mamluk from Egypt
Muṣṭafā (Nashshār) Pasha	962/1554-55	Protégé of Dāʾūd Pasha; Second period in office
Qarashāhīn Muṣṭafā ʿIzzet Pasha	963-967/1559-60	
Maḥmūd Pasha	967-972/1560-65	Protégé of Dāʾūd Pasha and Khādim ʿAlī Pasha[20]
Riḍwān Pasha + Murād Pasha	972-974/1565-67	dual governorship

[19] See for example MD 2 #1213, in which the governor of Egypt is ordered to appoint a replacement for the deceased aga of the Egyptian *mustaḥfizān* corps in Yemen, *mustaḥfizān* being a term used in Egypt to refer to Janissaries. See Temel Öztürk, "Egyptian Soldiers in Ottoman Campaigns from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries," *War in History* 23, no. 1 (January 2016): 4–19.

[20] Richard J. Blackburn, "Maḥmūd Pasha," in *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2012.

Rus Ḥasan Pasha	974-977/1567-70	
ʿUthmān Özdemir oğlu Pasha	976/1569	
Wazīr Koca Sinān Pasha	976/1569-70	re-conquest of Yemen

Table 2. Ottoman governors of Yemen from the conquest of 1547 to the reconquest of 1569-71.

Clashing ambitions

After Özdemir Pasha's successful campaign, Ferhād Pasha was appointed for a two-year-long governorship (954-956/1548-49). He was pushed into office by the ambitious governor of Egypt Dāʾūd Pasha.[21] His time in office went unnoticed in Zaydi sources, probably due to his focus on the coastal regions, especially Aden and Jāzān, but al-Nahrawālī, who met him in Aleppo in 965/1558, produced a flattering portrait of this governor. In the absence of additional confirmation, we can only cautiously point to the evidence that al-Nahrawālī provides, namely, to the fact that the governor organized courtly meetings, *majālis,* in which he generously rewarded the attendees from the scholarly and literary elites. [22] This could be an extrapolation of practices developed in Ottoman Syria independently from the Yemeni situation.[23] However, given that these developments took place within the lifetime and career of one Ottoman governor, they could be adduced as one of the few pieces of evidence that Ottoman policy in Yemen from early on included a cultural, 'soft power' dimension.

During the tenure of Ferhād Pasha's successor, Özdemir, Ottoman administration of Yemen started to develop in full force.[24] The center of Ottoman government was Zabīd, but an

[21] Blackburn, "The Ottoman Penetration of Yemen," 76, n. 38.
[22] al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 94, 102–3.
[23] Helen Pfeifer, "Encounter after the Conquest: Scholarly Gatherings in 16th-Century Ottoman Damascus," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47, no. 02 (May 2015): 219–39.
[24] Özdemir Pasha was not honest in his *Fetḥnāme* when he claimed he wanted to retire to Egypt. Blackburn, "The Ottoman Penetration of Yemen," 89; Hulûsi, *Yemen'de Osmanlı idâresi ve Rumûzî târihi (923-1012/1517-1604)*, cvi. In fact, Aḥmad, his messenger to Istanbul, was

Ottoman presence was also established in major Yemeni towns. The early structures put in place in Lower Yemen in the conquest period were extended to the newly added territories. The province was designated *salyāneli,* which implied that aside from a surplus that was expected to be sent to imperial center, the appointed Ottoman officials were developing a self-sustaining province. Ottoman strategy in the construction of the province involved both the implementation of Ottoman military and administrative practices, and the integration of local elites. This period saw an increase in Ottoman cooperation with the Zaydi *ashrāf* (sing. *sharīf,* descendant of the Prophet) and Shāfiʿī scholars from Lower Yemen, as well as tribal leaders.[25] This was a continuation of a trend started by the first governors of Yemen. By the time of Özdemir's campaign to conquer Ṣanʿāʾ, the Āl al-Ḥamza had joined the Ottomans in their operations.[26] The Ismaʿili tribes of Wādī Ḍahr and Ḥarāz were also active in the Üweys – Özdemir campaigns to conquer Taʿizz, Ṣanʿāʾ and the northern highlands.[27] Consistent attempts were made to integrate the Mamluks who captured parts of Yemen in the previous period.[28] By the time of Özdemir's appointment, the internal crisis of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate had resulted in an alliance between Shams al-Dīn b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf

instructed to petition the sultan to appoint Özdemir as governor of Yemen. al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 105.

[25] Al-Nahrawālī stresses the work of Özdemir Pasha with the tribes. al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 106.

[26] In 955/1548, Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn al-Ḥamzī of the Jawf brings his cavalry to support Özdemir's attacks on Muṭahhar. Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn Ibn al-Qāsim, *Ghāyat al-amānī fī akhbār al-quṭr al-yamānī*, ed. Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ ʿĀshūr and Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ziyādah (al-Qāhira: Dār al-kātib al-ʿarabī li-l-ṭibāʿa wa-l-nashr, 1968), vol. 2, p. 704.

[27] Samer Traboulsi, "The Ottoman Conquest of Yemen: The Ismaili Perspective," in *The Arab Lands in the Ottoman Empire: Essays in Honor of Professor Caesar Farah*, ed. Jane Hathaway, Minnesota Studies in Early Modern History (Minneapolis, MN: Center for Early Modern History, 2009), 49–50.

[28] Al-Nahrawālī recounts that the pasha provided stipends to the sons of deceased Mamluks commanders, such as Iskandar Mawz (uncertain reading). al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 86.

al-Dīn and the Ottomans against Muṭahhar b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn.[29] These connections, however, were fragile, and Özdemir Pasha spent most of his time in office at war against Muṭahhar, the *ashrāf* of the Jawf, and the Āl al-Muʾayyad as the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate was resisting incorporation into the empire. Nevertheless, relations between the Ottomans and local elites were furthered during the first phase of Ottoman provincial rule in Yemen.

The formation of a provincial administration required the Ottomans to establish tax collection and surveying routines and to appoint capable administrators (*kāshif*s, i.e. inspectors, *emīn*s, i.e. tax collectors, and *ʿāmil*s, i.e. governors).[30] It is possible that some of these new appointees were Yemeni; this is especially likely in the case of local tribes, whom Özdemir and other Ottoman officials integrated into the province by giving special privileges to the tribal shaykhs.[31] By the end of Özdemir's tenure in Yemen, Zaydi sources register the existence of an Ottoman *defterdār,* head of finance administration, called Behrām, who was also tasked with diplomatic responsibilities.[32] Notably, the Ottomans successfully maintained an administration in Ṣaʿda, led during the governorships of Qarashāhīn Muṣṭafā Pasha and Maḥmūd Pasha by a certain amīr Behrām (d. 973/1565). He was warmly remembered in Zaydi sources, which indicates that Ottoman administration was stabilizing in the region.[33] However, the presence of the Ottomans in Ṣaʿda was

[29] Shams al-Dīn travelled to Ṣanʿāʾ to pledge allegiance to the sultan (*muwālāt al-salṭana*). ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh writes that he requested and received an army (*ʿaskar*) to station in Shibām. This might mean that Shams al-Dīn was granted a military rank in the Ottoman system and perhaps even a sanjaq. Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 136–37.
[30] These appointments took place already in the time of amīr Muṣṭafā who was based in Zabīd. Hulûsi, *Yemen'de Osmanlı idâresi ve Rumûzî târihi (923-1012/1517-1604)*, vol. 1, p. xcvi; al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 86.
[31] Al-Nahrawālī mentions agreements (sing. *ʿaqd*, pl. *ʿuqūd*) that were concluded between the Ottomans and the tribes. *Wa ʿāhada [Özdemir] al-ʿurbān wa ʿāqadahum ʿuqūdan.* al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 117.
[32] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 143–44.
[33] Ibn Luṭfallāh, 161.

frequently challenged by the Āl al-Muʾayyad. In 962/1555, for example, when Muṣṭafā Nashshār died and the new governor of Yemen had not arrived yet, Aḥmad b. ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Muʾayyadī pushed the Ottoman appointee Iskender Bey out of the region.[34]

Unfortunately for Özdemir, his attempts to establish his authority in Yemen ran counter to the ambitions of Muṣṭafā Nashshār, who returned to Yemen in 956/1549 with an army of 3000 infantry armed with guns and 1000 cavalrymen provided to him by Egypt's Dāʾūd Pasha, presumably, to help Özdemir fight against Muṭahhar.[35] The two amīrs did not get along well and clashed over policy towards Muṭahhar. While Özdemir wanted to continue the assault on Muṭahhar's besieged fort, Thulā, Muṣṭafā Nashshār went ahead with peace negotiations and concluded a truce (*ṣulḥ*) with Muṭahhar.[36] Until 959/1552 Özdemir had to bear with the meddling amīr, who exhibited friendly attitudes towards Muṭahhar.[37] Their connection, however, seems to have been not only competitive. After Muṣṭafā Nashshār's death, Özdemir Pasha together with the then governor of Egypt Iskender Pasha petitioned the sultan to provide the sons of the deceased with salaries.[38] In the end, after Özdemir's retirement from Yemen, Muṣṭafā Nashshār was appointed there as governor. ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh implies that this pasha was perceived as weak by the Zaydis; it was after a meeting with him in the Tihāma that Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn advised his father Shams al-Dīn to seek an alliance with Muṭahhar against the Ottomans.[39] His governorship was short, and he died in Yemen in 962/1555.

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[34] Ibn al-Qāsim, *Ghāyat al-amānī fī akhbār al-quṭr al-yamānī*, vol. 2, pp. 716–717.
[35] al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 107.
[36] al-Nahrawālī, 108.
[37] al-Nahrawālī, 117.
[38] MD 2, #890 (dated 963).
[39] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 150. The same information is repeated in Ibn al-Qāsim, *Ghāyat al-amānī fī akhbār al-quṭr al-yamānī*, vol. 2, p. 716.

After Muṣṭafā Pasha, another group of influential Ottomans reached Yemen; they were members of the future Riḍwān dynasty of Gaza.[40] The founder of this dynasty, Qarashāhīn Muṣṭafā Pasha (Muṣṭafā ʿIzzet in ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh's chronicle) was appointed to Yemen after the death of Muṣṭafā Nashshār. His sons Behrām and Riḍwān both held the position of beylerbey of Yemen after him. Riḍwān and his cousin Maḥmūd beg also held the position of *defterdār* of Yemen.[41] Behrām and Maḥmūd accompanied Qarashāhīn Muṣṭafā Pasha during his first appointment to Yemen.[42] Behrām even received an appointment in Dhamār as regional *(sanjaq)* governor.[43] The Riḍwāns, as they are known to scholars of Syrian and Palestinian history of the Ottoman period, developed efficient methods of collaboration with Bedouin elites in the region.[44] In fact, they can be considered specialists in incorporating tribal elites into Ottoman systems, as is indicated by their appointments to Diyarbekir (an area where one needed to deal with Kurdish tribes), Basra, Yemen, Egypt, Shām (regions dominated by Arab tribes), and, finally, Ethiopia (Habesh). Interestingly, Muṣṭafā Pasha, who, according to Ottoman *mühimme* records, was very active in Yemen, is barely remarked upon in the Zaydi sources. The war against the Āl Shams al-Dīn, for instance,

[40] Dror Ze'evi, *An Ottoman Century. The District of Jerusalem in the 1600s.*, SUNY Series in Medieval Middle East History (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 39–41.
[41] Al-Nahrawālī's report in which he praises the governorship of Qarashāhīn Muṣṭafā should probably be taken with a grain of salt since the scholar met him, his sons and nephew in Mecca and seems to have liked them personally. al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 123–24.
[42] al-Nahrawālī, 123. Maḥmūd still held the position of *defterdār* of Yemen during the governorship of Murād Pasha and thus ended up captured by Muṭahhar. He left Yemen only in 983. Kānī Çelebi, *Bughyat al-khāṭir wa nuzhat al-nāẓir,* NF E.391.ar, f. 129a; *Bulūgh al-marām,* BNF Ar. 1651, f. 105a; Ibn Dāʿir, *al-Futūḥāt al-murādīya fī-l-jihāt al-yamānīya,* vols. 3-4, Raghib Pasha 979 (The digitized version of this manuscript provided by the University of Toronto Library is not paginated) https://archive.org/details/alfuttalmurdyah03ibnd (Accessed Jan 5, 2021).
[43] MD 2, #262 (dated 963/1556).
[44] A great-grandson of Qarashāhīn Muṣṭafā Pasha was even known as "Arap". Ze'evi, *An Ottoman Century. The District of Jerusalem in the 1600s.*, 40.

for which his son Behrām and several other officers received awards,[45] is not mentioned by either ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh or Yaḥyā Ibn al-Qāsim or even al-Nahrawālī.

The slow entrenchment of Ottoman rule in the region resulted in an expansion of documentary production. In this period financial documents and *mühimme* records related to Yemen start to consistently appear in central archives of the Ottoman Empire. This increased documentation of the life of the province maps well onto the central administrative reforms and adjustments of the time. The systematized *mühimme* registers, chronologically arranged summaries of imperial orders, appear in the Ottoman system in 1545. Their appearance has been linked to the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, and the growing need for the state to systematize relevant information.[46] The parallel development of the main instrument of Ottoman administration, the financial *defter,* also coincides with the establishment of Ottoman provincial rule in Yemen. The earliest documents from this period date to 951/1544 and concern the transfer of military forces from Egypt to Yemen.[47] Another set of documents from 961/1554 is addressed to the governor of Yemen.[48] All of these files pertain to the confirmation of *sanjaq* appointments in Yemen, proposed by Özdemir Pasha. The Pasha continued to lobby for appointments of his supporters even after his retirement from Yemen.[49] Interestingly, there are no traces of land surveys from the period of Özdemir's or Qarashāhīn Muṣṭafā's governorships; these documents do not seem to have survived or are

[45] MD 2 ##1475-1476, both dated 963/1556, MD 2 #2025, dated 964/1557. In the meantime, ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh only notices that the governor changed the call to prayer, while Ibn al-Qāsim remarks that in the years 964/1557 and 966/1559 there were no events of note. Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 151; Ibn al-Qāsim, *Ghāyat al-amānī fī akhbār al-quṭr al-yamānī*, vol. 2, pp. 717–18.
[46] Heather L. Ferguson, *The Proper Order of Things: Language, Power, and Law in Ottoman Administrative Discourses* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2018), 143–44, 157.
[47] TSMA.e.12321, #119 in Halil Sahillioğlu, ed., *Topkapı Sarayı Arşivi H. 951-952 tarihli ve E-12321 numaralı mühimme defteri* (Istanbul: İslam Tarih, Sanat ve Kültür Araştırma Merkezi - IRCICA, 2002), 97–98.
[48] MD 1, ##428, 1204, 1224, 1303, 1307, 1347.
[49] MD 1, #1634, 1636, both from 962/1555; MD 2, #1281 (from 963/1556).

preserved outside Istanbul (Egypt and Yemen being two potential locations). However, remarks in other surviving documents from this period point to their existence, which confirms that the main tool of Ottoman administration, the survey, was imported into Yemen around the 1550s. Ironically, the first financial register from Yemen that I have been able to find, TSMA.d.314,[50] was composed during the governorship of Maḥmūd Pasha, who is considered a corrupt governor (see below).

Even though we should use Ottoman financial documents with caution, TSMA.d.314 allows us to assess the state of development of the Ottoman provincial administration of Yemen at the end of this first period of Ottoman rule in the region. At this time, the structure of Yemen for financial purposes involved five main components – the vilayets of Zabīd, Taʿizz, Ṣanʿāʾ, and Ṣaʿda, as well as the ports (*iskelehā*) of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean including Mocha, Ḥudayda, Ṣulayf, Kamaran Island, Aden, Jāzān and even a port in Shiḥr.[51] The interesting point here is the scope of Ottoman control over Yemen; the Ottomans appear to be the first regime in Yemen that was able to collect taxes in the northern highlands and Ṣaʿda as well as the coastal regions of the Tihama and Lower Yemen.

The main taxation instruments in Yemen, according to the register, were the *kharāj,* land tax, and *muqāṭaʿa,* a tax farming system, with the land tax providing most of the income.[52] In

[50] Salih Özbaran was the first scholar who analyzed this financial register. Salih Özbaran, "A Note on the Ottoman Administration in Arabia in the Sixteenth Century," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 3, no. 1 (1984): 93–99.
[51] TSMA.d.314, ff. 1b-2a, 4b.
[52] Özbaran, "A Note on the Ottoman Administration in Arabia in the Sixteenth Century," 97. It is unclear what is meant by *kharāj* in Yemeni tax documents; in Ottoman taxation the term was used to denote the *jizya* poll-tax paid by non-Muslims, however, in Yemeni tax registers *jizya* is recorded separately. In that case, it is most probable that *kharāj* is referring to land tax. See Linda T. Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy. Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire, 1560-1660*, The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage. Politics, Society and Economy (Leiden / New York / Köln: E.J. Brill, 1996), 312.

documents sent from the imperial center to the governors of Yemen, the tax farms of Yemen are mentioned as a source of financial security.[53] We would expect to find tax farming practices in Lower Yemen, an area that was under Ottoman control for longer than the highlands. Indeed, TSMA.d.314 contains records of tax farms given out for the collection of tax on sheep (*rüsūm al-aghnām*) in the Zabīd area, and for the treasury (*beytülmāl*) in Taʿizz.[54] In addition, the Ottoman government managed the waqfs of the mosques in the Taʿizz region.[55] The financial operations of the Ottomans were not limited to Lower Yemen. In Zabīd, Taʿizz, Ṣanʿāʾ and even Ṣaʿda there were some *zeamets,* revenue grants, as well as *iḥtisāb,* market supervision tax, even if limited to the urban centers themselves.[56] The Ottoman administration successfully collected taxes on the properties (*emlāk*) of members of the Āl Sharaf al-Dīn – Muṭahhar, Shams al-Dīn and ʿIzz al-Dīn – in the Ṣanʿāʾ area.[57] In the Ṣaʿda area *kharāj* taxes were collected in a variety of mountainous tribal regions – Falalah, Ḥaqqār – and a tax farm was established for the town of Ṣaʿḍa, its mint (*ḍarbḥāne*) and *beytülmāl*.[58] Moreover, tax farms provided a way to integrate tribal elites. For example, a shaykh from Taʿkar, classified as a *müteferriqa-i dīwān-i wilāyet-i Yemen*, collected taxes on behalf of the Ottomans in his own tribe.[59] A shaykh from Jubn was equally tasked with

[53] MD 5, #710 (discussed in Hulûsi, *Yemen'de Osmanlı idâresi ve Rumûzî târihi (923-1012/1517-1604)*, vol. 1, pp. xci–xcii.
[54] TSMA.d.314, ff. 4a, 5a.
[55] TSMA.d.314, f. 5b.
[56] TSMA.d.314, ff. 4a, 4b.
[57] TSMA.d.314, f. 6a.
[58] TSMA.d.314, f. 6b.
[59] TSMA.d.314, f. 7a: *ʿan taḥwīl shaykh .. b. ʿAlī al-Taʿkarī ʿan müteferriqa-i dīwān-i wilāyet-i Yemen.* The *müteferriqa* in the Ottoman Empire were an elite military corps; inscription into it was a tool of integration of local elites. In this case, the elite division was created not by the sultan, but by his government in Yemen (*dīwān-i wilāyet-i Yemen*). See also İ. Metin Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650*, The Modern Middle East Series (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 39.

tax collection in his area.[60] Judging by the register, despite efforts to improve economic control over the northern regions, the main income of the Ottoman administration in this period came from Lower Yemen and the Tihāma area.[61]

The same financial register provides evidence of the Ottoman policy that became characteristic of the 'golden age' of Ottoman rule in Yemen under Ḥasan Pasha. We find here evidence of incorporation of two key elite groups – the sayyids and the tribes. The financial record lists salary payments (*muwājibāt*) paid to the *ashrāf* of Ṣaʿda, the Jawf and Jāzān – an indication of an early recognition of the need to cooperate with the sayyids of these unruly regions and a demonstration of the reach of Ottoman power in this early period. Additionally, the Ottomans worked to incorporate tribal elites as partners in the imperial project. The Hamdān tribe received payments as a military unit within the Ottoman army in Yemen.[62] Tribal shaykhs were inscribed in the *müteferriqa* class and entrusted with tax farms. Another method of Ottoman engagement with local tribes in this period was hostage-taking. The register lists payments provided to the Ottomans for the maintenance of hostages in Ṣanʿāʾ, possibly the earliest documentary record of this political arrangement.[63] It was only at a later stage, when the Ottoman presence in the region grew stronger as a result of Koca Sinān Pasha's campaign, that the practice of hostage-taking expanded to the sayyids. The financial register thus records a developed Ottoman system in Yemen.

[60] TSMA.d.314, f. 7a: *ʿan taḥwīl Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh … ʿan mashāyikh wilāyet-i Jubn.*
[61] TSMA.d.314, ff. 3b-4a.
[62] TSMA.d.314, f. 8a.
[63] TSMA.d.314, f. 6a: *muqāṭiʿ maḥābis-i rahāʾin-i ʿarabān-i wilāyet-i Yemen ki dar qaṣr-i Ṣanʿāʾ maḥbūs shudand.*

The Ottoman army in Yemen

The main instrument for the assertion of Ottoman military control in Yemen, as was the case across the empire, was the system of forts. Yemen's mountainous terrain lent itself well to the implementation of this system. Özdemir Pasha was one of the first Ottoman governors to expand the system by building forts (*ḥiṣn,* pl. *ḥuṣūn* and *qalʿa,* pl. *qilāʿ*) along the roads in newly conquered regions and by stationing military units in them.[64] By 968/1561 the Ottomans were staffing sixty-six forts in various regions of Lower and Upper Yemen.[65] There were few forts in the Tihāma area (two in Zabīd, one of which was the fort of Zabīd itself, two in Jāzān, six in Jabal Buraʿ), and the majority of these was located between Ṣanʿāʾ, Taʿizz and Ṣaʿda.

Looking at the map of Ottoman forts in Yemen one can see the chain of forts along the Sarat mountains as protecting the maritime regions from the highlands. However, as far as it is possible to distinguish, the forts were not built to cut off the seashore from the highlands but to protect roads connecting them. An example of this strategy can be seen in the chain of forts connecting Ṣaʿda to Jāzān: Ḥadāʾir, Miftāḥ and Ḥurum. While the financial register does not contain traces of a fort network in the Ḥajja region, as it was only developed after Koca Sinān Pasha's expedition, there is a chain of forts present in the Ḥarāz mountains (the vilayets of Ḥufāsh and Milḥān of the Ottoman documents) that could support a direct connection from Ṣanʿāʾ to Ḥudayda, the closest Tihāma port. A similar strategy of connection through protection was pursued in the interior. For example, the forts of the Baʿdān region were strategic for the protection of the road

[64] "He secured the rest of the roads and build along some of them secured forts" (*ḍabaṭa sāʾir ṭuruqāt al-barr wa banā fī baʿḍihā ḥuṣūnan wa qilāʿan muḥkama*). al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 117.
[65] TSMA.d.314, ff. 8a-9b.

connecting Lower Yemen to the Dhamār plain, whereas the forts north of Ṣanʿāʾ guarded the roads to Ṣaʿda.

Ṣanʿāʾ lay at the heart of Ottoman interests in Yemen at the time. The list of forts mentions areas such as Ḥuḍūr, Ḥaqqār, Milḥān and Ḥufāsh, Bilād Ānis, Rayma, Radāʿ, Sanḥān and Qubbatayn as part of the *wilāyet-i Ṣanʿāʾ*. There is a geographical logic to this, as these areas are located around Ṣanʿāʾ, in the central and north-western regions of Yemen. This shows a reorientation of the Ottoman administration from a predominant focus on the Lower Yemen towards the highlands. One possible explanation for this could be coffee, as many of these regions, according to later evidence, were coffee producing.[66] The military register, however, provides no insights into the economy of these areas. Another explanation for the proliferation of Ottoman forts in the northern highlands is connected to the management of the pilgrimage route to Mecca: travelers preferred the route through the mountains since there were more water sources there.[67] Indeed, the route from Ṣanʿāʾ to Ṣaʿda that could be covered by travelers in ten days is cited as the main route of the pilgrimage already in pre-Ottoman Yemeni sources.[68] However, as far as I have been able to identify the forts in the register, they do not seem to correspond to any of the locations on the Yemeni pilgrimage route.

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[66] Deflers, a late nineteenth century botanist traveling in Yemen, listed wādī Lāʿa, the mountains of Kawkabān, Milḥān and Ḥufāsh, Ḥuḍūr, Ḥarāz, Buraʿ, Rayma, Bilād Ānis and Banū Maṭar, Wuṣāb, and the region between Ḥays and ʿUdayn as some of the key highland coffee-producing regions in Yemen. In addition, he mentioned al-Ḥujayrīya, between Taʿizz and Mocha, and Yāfiʿ, other region were regions where the Ottomans developed their presence in the early modern period. Albert Deflers, *Voyage au Yemen: journal d'une excursion botanique faite en 1887 dans les montagnes de l'Arabie heureuse* (Paris: P. Klincksieck, 1889), 143.

[67] Andrew Petersen, "Early Ottoman Forts on the Darb Al-Hajj," *Levant* 21, no. 1 (1989): 99.

[68] Muḥammad ibn ʻAbd al-Raḥmān Rāshid Thanayyān, *An Archaeological Study of the Yemeni Highland Pilgrim Route between Ṣanʻāʾ and Mecca* (Riyadh: Deputy Ministry of Antiquities and Museums, 1999), xxix–xxx.

The financial register TSMA.d.314 from the governorship of Maḥmūd Pasha provides information about how the Ottoman army in Yemen developed after the conquest. Based on the information on *salyāne* payments in the 968/1561 register, the top officers – beys – in Yemen counted nineteen men and were spread in the different areas recognized as subdivisions (*wilāyet*s) within the region.[69] The document refers to two main military groups – the army of Yemen and the army of Egypt, on the one hand, and officers (*çavuşān*) of the government of Yemen (*dīwān-i wilāyet-i Yemen*) on the other. The army of Yemen proper included a Janissary corps, the elite *müteferriqa* corps*, tüfenkçiyān* (musketeers)*, mustahfiẓān, azebān* (infantry)*,* and already in this early period employed groups from Arab tribes, especially shaykhs in the *müteferriqa* group.[70] The Egyptian army in 968/1561 was represented by a group of *tüfenkçiyān* and *mustaḥfiẓān.* Officers (*çavuşān*) of the *dīwān-i wilāyet-i Yemen* were employed not only in military capacities. For example, Süleyman ʿAbdallāh, a *çavuş* of the *dīwān-i wilāyet-i Yemen* was tasked with the reconstruction of the castle (*qaṣr*) of Ṣanʿāʾ, the residence of the Ottoman governors.[71] The Ottoman military in Yemen included a substantial artillery division with its varied subgroups – the *jebejiyān* (armorers)*, topçuyān* (cannoneers)*,* and *ʿarabajiyān* (drivers)*.* The Ottoman artillery-related infrastructure was not easy to adapt to Yemeni conditions. A large issue was transportation outside the plateaus. Thus, an expedition to Aden in 968/1561 required the hiring of camel-drivers to transport the artillery.[72]

The army of Yemen was regularly replenished with cadres from Egypt. In 951/1544, the beylerbey of Egypt Ḥusayn Pasha was tasked with the transfer to Yemen of recruits (*gönüllü*s),

[69] TSMA.d.314, f. 7b.
[70] TSMA.d.314, f. 2b.
[71] TSMA.d.314, f. 2a.
[72] TSMA.d.314, f. 10a: *kirāye-i shütürān barāy-i taḥmīl kerden-i quwwet-i khaṣṣa ʿan Radāʿ ilā bender ʿAden maʿa taḥmīl kerden-i jebejiyān.*

musketeers on horses (*atlu tüfenkçi*), Circassian mamluks, fort guards (*ḥiṣār erenleri*), and the infantry (*ʿazeb*).[73] There is not sufficient information on internal affairs of the army, and only rare mentions in Zaydi sources point to infighting in the Ottoman army in this period. One suspects, however, that there were clashes between the Egyptian army (*ʿasker-i Miṣr*) and Yemeni army (*ʿasker-i Yemen*) over authority and precedence (including in receipt of payments), as well as general army discontent over payments. In 963/1556, for example, there was a clash between the Ottoman regiments of Ṣanʿāʾ and Zabīd.[74] The fight started over questions of authority: the *defterdār* who was allegedly appointed to lead the army of Zabīd by the recently deceased Muṣṭafā Nashshār was challenged by the *kāshif* of Taʿizz.[75]

The total number of Ottoman military personnel in Yemen is, despite the existence of these registers, hard to establish. The number of soldiers of all categories, based on TSMA.d.314, varies from 5464 in 968/1561 to 9017 in 969/1562.[76] Supporting the army financially in Yemen was not easy even if it always remained the top priority of the governor and his administration. In the time of Maḥmūd Pasha, according to al-Nahrawālī, in a situation aggravated by coin debasement and inflation, soldiers started selling off their weapons and belongings to support themselves.[77] Additionally, military discipline deteriorated through the engagement of soldiers in local trade, a trend

[73] TSMA E-12321, #120: Sahillioğlu, *Topkapı Sarayı Arşivi H. 951-952 tarihli ve E-12321 numaralı mühimme defteri*, 97.
[74] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 151.
[75] The *kāshif* of Taʿizz was called Mīrzā b. Naṣūḥ; it is possible that he is the one recognized as the interim governor of Yemen in the *mühimme* records, see for example MD 2, #42, 131, 300, where he is called *Yemen muḥāfiẓi* (protector of Yemen).
[76] Calculations of Salih Özbaran. Özbaran, "A Note on the Ottoman Administration in Arabia in the Sixteenth Century," 96, 99.
[77] al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 128.

that only begins in this period but comes to full force by the end of the 'golden age', and through the introduction of relatives of janissaries as equal members of the military.[78]

Who was responsible for the decline of Ottoman rule in Yemen?

The decline of Ottoman rule in the province of Yemen at the end of this first period has been addressed in scholarship and is usually attributed to two factors: the corruption of the governors and the unfortunate decision to divide the province into two segments governed separately.[79] In this section, I argue that this approach disregards the Zaydi factor and the successes of the Zaydis in opposing Ottoman rule, which became possible due to a networking failure of the Ottoman administration.

A corrupt governor?

Some Yemeni sources and, echoing them, Western scholarship insist that of all Ottoman governors in Yemen, the activities of Maḥmūd Pasha in particular led to the collapse of Ottoman rule there.[80] Specifically, this governor is accused of silver coin debasement, inflation and self-

[78] On relatives of janissaries see TSMA.d.7926, a register composed during the dual tenure of Riḍwān and Murād Pasha. On a similar situation on the Hungarian frontier see Pál Fodor, "Making a Living on the Frontiers," in *In Quest of the Golden Apple: Imperial Ideology, Politics, and Military Administration in the Ottoman Empire* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2000), 282.
[79] Richard J. Blackburn, "The Collapse of Ottoman Authority in Yemen, 968/1560-976/1568," *Die Welt Des Islams* 19, no. 1/4 (1979): 119–76; Blackburn, "Maḥmūd Pasha"; Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 131–32.
[80] Notably, al-Nahrawālī, who did not like this governor because of several mishaps that took place in Mecca. Firstly, when Maḥmūd, then *kethuda* of Dāʾūd Pasha of Egypt, arrived there with gifts for the sharīf, he was not pleased with how he was received. Then al-Nahrawālī accused him of mismanagement in the two years when he got to Mecca as *amīr al-ḥajj.* al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 126. This version is repeated by Blackburn and Casale.

enrichment.[81] According to al-Nahrawālī, his misdeeds and injustice (*ẓulm*) as governor included the execution of the *amīn dār al-ḍarb,* the head of the mint, as well as several other Ottoman officials and the confiscation of their fortunes, and the war against the Āl al-Naẓārī of Baʿdān. These actions were criticized by al-Nahrawālī and his opinion has dominated the historiography ever since.

However, there is evidence that Maḥmūd Pasha was in fact not as illogical and greedy as the Meccan historian wanted to show him. His governorship is the first one from which a financial register survives. TSMA.d.314 discussed above demonstrates a surplus of income that was delivered as annual remission (*irsāliye*) to Istanbul in 971/1564 together with the *defter,* register.[82] This might be due to the fact that Maḥmūd's governorship seems to have been the first in which coffee became a staple of export.[83] Under his rule Ottoman officials in Yemen started receiving payments from the customs (*gümrük resmi)* on spices (*bahārāt*), which indicates that he succeeded in establishing firmer state control over trade.[84] The income from Yemen was considered significant enough at the Ottoman center. As a result, the treasury of Yemen, jointly with the treasury of Egypt, was tasked with providing *salyāne* payments to the forces in Abyssinia/Habesh.[85] This points to good management, if not to the full absence of corruption.

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[81] In fact, coin devaluation probably started under Qarashāhīn Muṣṭafā Pasha. Blackburn, "The Collapse of Ottoman Authority," 124–25.
[82] Özbaran, "A Note on the Ottoman Administration in Arabia in the Sixteenth Century," 95.
[83] One piece of evidence is the mention of coffee in al-Nahrawālī's critique of the governor's management of the army's salary – *wa dhālika lā yafī bi-thaman al-qahwa allatī yashrubuhā.* al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 128.
[84] MD 3, #1493. The tradition was reaffirmed in the days of Riḍwān Pasha, specifically for the salyāne of the governor. A.RSK.d.1458, f. 27. The increasing revenues from trade that Yemeni ports reaped in this period were a direct result of Ottoman expansion preceding the 1540s. Michel Tuchscherer, "Commerce et production du café en mer Rouge au XVIe siècle," in *Le commerce du café avant l'ère des plantations coloniales*, ed. Michel Tuchscherer (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 2001), 75–76.
[85] MD 5, #1163 (dated 973/1565).

The campaign in Baʿdān, so harshly judged by al-Nahrawālī, had in fact serious geopolitical stakes. The mountains of Baʿdān are a region overlooking Ibb and the valley that connects it though the Sumāra pass to the Dhamār plain. Given that Ibb was an important agricultural center and that the connection through Sumāra was the straightest path to Ṣanʿāʾ, the desire of the pasha to establish a firm control of the strategic forts overlooking these territories is understandable.[86] The Āl al-Naẓārī who controlled Jabal Baʿdān were not as innocent as al-Nahrawālī makes them out to be. The family, descendants of the Rasulid wazīr ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Naẓārī and Ṭāhirid officials, came to rule Baʿdān as a result of treaties with imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn and his son Muṭahhar.[87] Even though they established an alliance with the Ottomans through the merchant ʿAbdallāh b. ʿUmar al-Riyāmī who was a confidant of Muṣṭafā Nashshār Pasha, [88] they maintained friendly connections with Muṭahhar.[89] The Āl al-Naẓārī successfully kept a semi-autonomous status for several decades, but in light of the expansion of Muṭahhar's military activity against the Ottomans and their strategic location, they had to be removed. Moreover, the seemingly unique attack on the Āl al-Naẓārī was part of a larger pattern of violent Ottoman responses to Muṭahhar's revolt. Supporters of Muṭahhar from an Ismāʿīlī background, for example, Muḥammad b.

[86] TSMA.d.314, f. 19a: the list of forts included newly conquered (*jedīd feth shüd*) forts of Baʿdān region such as Ḥamrāʾ, Nuʿm, Manār, Ḥabb.
[87] Fayrūz, *Maṭāli' al-nīrān,* BNF Arabe 1651, f. 4a/6a; Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 57; al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 129.
[88] Fayrūz, BNF Ar. 1651, f. 12a/14a. The daughter of al-Riyāmī was married into the al-Naẓārī family. al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 130–31.
[89] Al-Nahrawālī denies that any such contacts took place. al-Nahrawālī, 132. *Kān al-Naẓārī shāfiʿī al-madhhab, sunnī al-iʿtiqād yakrah ṭawāʾif al-zaydīya wa yuqātiluhum… wa kān min akbar aʿḍāʾihi Muṭahhar b. Sharaf al-Dīn.*

ʿAbdallāh al-Yāmī, were similarly executed by Riḍwān Pasha in 974/1566 for joining the uprising.[90] There were, however, no outcries of injustice on the part of al-Nahrawālī on that occasion.

At the heart of the misrepresentation of Maḥmūd Pasha in historiography is al-Nahrawālī's dislike of the governor. This personal attitude stemmed from the fact that Maḥmūd Pasha, a representative of the Indian party of the powerful Mehmed Sokollu and a fellow Bosnian, was focused on the Red Sea and Arabian trade and the place of Yemen in it; it is possibly to this end that he married the widow of the Ottoman appointee to Jidda, a certain amīr Hoshgeldi.[91] His interests, however, ran counter to the ambitions of al-Nahrawālī's patrons, the sharīfs of Mecca, and put the pasha of Yemen in their way. One particular offence was the elimination of the sharīfs from the management of the spice trade in the region as part of a larger incursion of the Ottoman state into local trade management.[92] The sharīfs were quick to show their displeasure: when Maḥmūd Pasha was returning from Yemen and travelled via Mecca, al-Nahrawālī was tasked to send him away to

[90] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 168–69. Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Yāmī was an ally of Özdemir Pasha who helped him fight against the Ṣaʿda sayyids. Ibn al-Muʾayyad, *al-Tuḥfa al-ʿanbarīya,* NF D.451.ar, f. 142b.

[91] al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 126–27. A sanjaqbey of Jidda called Hoshgeldi Bey appears in two Ottoman documents – a sales document from 947 (TSMA.e.161.6, old shelfmark TSMA 287/1) and a 1008 copy of a report on construction in Mecca (TSMA.e.850.32, old shelfmark TSMA 7625/1). In addition to this, al-Nahrawālī was unhappy with Maḥmūd Pasha because in his days as governor of Egypt he executed many people whom al-Nahrawālī knew. The Meccan historian claimed that all of this was due to the vengefulness of the pasha. al-Nahrawālī, 151–52. On links between Maḥmūd Pasha and Mehmed Sokollu see Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 131–32.

[92] MD 3, #1493: the sharīf of Mecca, according to an order from the sultan, was not to interfere in the taxation of these commodities. He was also informed of the new decision (MD 3, #1499). These documents and their implications are also discussed in Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 140–41. The new rule was reaffirmed during the governorship of Riḍwān Pasha. A.RSK.d.1458, f. 27. The conflict over customs continued well into the sixteenth century and coincided with the rise of Mocha as a key port of the Red Sea (and the decline of Jeddah). Tuchscherer, "Commerce et production du café en mer Rouge au XVIe siècle," 79–80.

Jidda since Mecca, allegedly, could not support his army.[93] Aside from this, there is no confirmation of exceptional corruption on the part of the Pasha or that he was exclusively to be blamed for the crisis in Ottoman Yemen. Al-Nahrawālī's version of events held up because Maḥmūd Pasha died in Jumādā II 975/ December 1567[94] and thus did not have an opportunity to present an alternative version. Al-Nahrawālī's version spread because his patron who commissioned the work, especially its final segment on the reconquest of Yemen, was Koca Sinān Pasha, no friend of Mehmed Sokollu Pasha and his allies. Through Koca Sinan's patronage the work of al-Nahrawālī, later translated into Ottoman Turkish, was extensively copied, and read across the Ottoman world and thus came to dominate the historiography.[95]

Administrative division?

Another common explanation for the collapse of Ottoman rule at the end of this first period is linked to the division of Yemen into two beylerbeyliks. According to this storyline, due to court intrigues of Maḥmūd Pasha, who was in opposition to the Riḍwāns, the Ottoman center decided to divide the vilayet of Yemen into two parts under the command of two beylerbeys.[96] This poorly

[93] al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 138–39. *Innā Makka lā taḥmil ʿaskarahu … al-munāsib an yatawajjahū ilā Jidda.* The sharīf did not travel in person to meet the pasha and put al-Nahrawālī in a difficult position, tasking him with delivering this unwelcoming message. The historian reports that he spent quite some time deciding how to phrase it (*thaqula ʿalayy an astaftiḥahu bi-hādhā-l-kalām*) but was saved by the Pasha himself who announced that he was heading to Jidda in any case.

[94] al-Nahrawālī, 154.

[95] On copies presented to Koca Sinān, Mehmed Sokollu and sultan Murad, see al-Nahrawālī, 60–72. Among surviving copies many were owned by various Ottoman officials in Egypt, Syria and Istanbul. The eight copies that I consulted are listed in the appendix.

[96] MD 5, #710-711, dated Jumādā II 973 / December 1565; discussed in Hulûsi, *Yemen'de Osmanlı idâresi ve Rumûzî târihi (923-1012/1517-1604)*, vol. 1, pp. xci–xcii. Ottoman historians, like Kānī Çelebi, share the opinion that this led to the collapse of Ottoman government in Yemen. Kānī Çelebi, *Bughyat al-khāṭir wa nuzhat al-nāẓir,* NF E.391.ar, f. 125b: *an takūn ithnayn min al-bāshawāt wa mā gharaḍuhu min dhālika illā kharāb al-Yaman*.

timed decision resulted in a weakened Ottoman presence; the lack of coordination between the two governors made it easier for Muṭahhar to lead an attack against the Ottomans.

The idea of separating Upper Yemen and Lower Yemen had been present in Ottoman administrative thinking for some time, but previously the unifying trend had prevailed. Why did the Ottomans pursue the division policy at this time? The proposal that seems to have tipped the scales came from Maḥmūd Pasha, who considered Yemen a vast and complex region that needed to be approached with care. While the document containing his suggestion does not survive, a remark by Muṣṭafā ʿĀlī might indicate that the Pasha was drawing a comparison with the vilayets of Shām (Syria, based in Damascus) and Aleppo.[97] If that is indeed the case, this could point to reasons other than enmity between the two Ottoman officials. The parallel that Maḥmūd Pasha could have been alluding to is that Aleppo and Damascus were the two centers of Ottoman Syria, but were traditionally divided into separate regional governorships, even though there was no separate janissary corps in Aleppo.[98]

Our understanding of the context of this decision is once again skewed by al-Nahrawālī, who construes this as a plot by Maḥmūd to cover up his misdeeds in Yemen and to get back at Riḍwān Pasha. Riḍwān, son of Qarashāhīn Muṣṭafā, did not inspire trust in Maḥmūd Pasha, who confided to al-Nahrawālī that he expected Riḍwān to destroy Yemen.[99] It is possible that Maḥmūd

[97] Mustafa bin Ahmet Âli, *Künhü'l-ahbâr: dördüncü rükn, Osmanlı tarihi*, ed. Ali Çavuşoğlu and Ahmet Uğur, Türk Tarih Kurumu yayınları (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2009), 430b–31a.
[98] Bruce A. Masters, "Aleppo, Ottoman," in *Encyclopedia of Islam, THREE,* edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, Joh Nawas, and Everett Rowson. Brill Online, 2014.
[99] al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 139. *Dhakara lī annahu wulliya mawḍiʿahu Riḍwān Pasha wa annahu sa-yakhrab al-Yaman wa yaqaʿ bi-hā fitna ʿaẓīma.* This version is also discussed in Blackburn, "The Collapse of Ottoman Authority," 129–30; Richard J. Blackburn, "Two Documents on the Division of Ottoman Yemen into Two Beglerbegiliks (973/1565)," *Turcica* 27 (1995): 229–30; Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 131–32. The whole exchange could, of course, be literary framing.

Pasha considered Riḍwān an outsider vis-à-vis the party to which he himself belonged, namely that of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, the grand vizier at the time and a fellow Bosnian.[100] Another line of opposition was that Maḥmūd Pasha belonged to the "Egyptian" group of Ottoman officials in Yemen, whereas Riḍwān belonged to the "Syrian" party.[101] Maḥmūd Pasha was not alone in his dislike of Riḍwān: Ibrāhīm Bey (d. 974/1566), the former *defterdār* of Egypt, who was at the time holding a *sanjaq* in the Hijaz and hoping to get the appointment to Yemen, was outbid by Riḍwān Pasha and had no warm feelings for him.[102] Maḥmūd Pasha's concerns could also stem from the fact that Riḍwān brought a clientele with him. The *defterdār* of Yemen in this period was Maḥmūd bey, the son of the sister of Qarāshāhīn Muṣṭafā Pasha.[103] The Pasha made sure to appoint his son Aḥmed to the lucrative Ibb and Jibla vilayets.[104] All this can be seen as the takeover of Yemen by the Riḍwāns.

Our suspicion that al-Nahrawālī is not impartial in his description of the relationship between Maḥmūd Pasha and the Riḍwāns is based on his claim that due to Maḥmūd's interference and the division of Yemen, Riḍwān got the poorer areas of Yemen.[105] The presumed

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[100] al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 150. Maḥmūd Pasha underlined his connection to Sokollu Mehmed based on their Bosnian origin in a conversation with al-Nahrawālī. According to the Meccan historian, it is through this connection that he then became governor of Egypt. See also Blackburn, "The Collapse of Ottoman Authority," 130–31; Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 131–32.

[101] Ibn Dāʿir writes about the father of Riḍwān, Qarashāhīn Muṣṭafā Pasha, that in his days the governorship of Gaza was the path to the governorship of Yemen: *niyābat Ghazza waqtaʾidh kānat ṭarīqan li-wilāyat arḍ al-Yaman.* Ibn Dāʿir, *al-Futūḥāt al-murādīya fī-l-jihāt al-yamānīya,* vol. 3, Raghib Pasha 979. The digitized version provided by the University of Toronto Library is not paginated.

[102] al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 157.

[103] al-Nahrawālī, 123.

[104] al-Nahrawālī, 166. Ibn Dāʿir, *al-Futūḥāt al-murādīya,* vol. 3, Raghib Pasha 979.

[105] al-Nahrawālī, 159. *Lammā waṣala Riḍwān Bāshā ilā-l-Yaman sharaʿ yataʿaqqab aḥwāl Maḥmūd Bāshā … wa yaʿriḍu taqṣīrātihi ilā-l-bāb al-ʿālī… wa lammā faṭana li-dhālika Maḥmūd Bāshā ʿaraḍa anna-l-Yaman mamlaka wāsiʿa wa annahā taḥtāj ilā beklerbekiyayn.*

impoverishment of Riḍwān is counterfactual, as he kept control over not just Ṣaʿda, and Ṣanʿāʾ, but also the agriculturally rich areas of Ibb and Jibla, as well as Aden.[106] When Maḥmūd Pasha saw the appointment order for the son of Riḍwān Pasha as sanjaq holder in Jibla and Ibb that classified these areas as part of the vilayet of Ṣanʿāʾ, he had to point out that this division left the Lower Yemen vilayet with close to no income.[107]

The governorship of Riḍwān in Yemen is documented by two groups of historians – the Zaydis, like ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh and Yaḥyā b. al-Qāsim, and the Tihāma and Hijaz historians like al-Mawzaʿī and al-Nahrawālī. They present two versions of the events. According to the Zaydi historians, the blame for the disintegration of Ottoman rule under Riḍwān and Muṭahhar's uprising lies on qāḍī Ṣālih al-Kawzānī (or al-Kūrānī or al-Karānī; it is quite possible that this qāḍī was of Kurdish descent). This qāḍī supposedly met Muṭahhar in Thulā on the orders of Riḍwān Pasha to review the existing treaty. Muṭahhar told him that the treaty had to stay as it was, but the qāḍī reported to Riḍwān that Muṭahhar was preparing to revolt. The Pasha was convinced by this and therefore proceeded with military preparations.[108] The Hijazi and Tihāma historians place the blame on Muṭahhar, who exploited the conflict between Riḍwān Pasha and Murād Pasha, the governor of Lower Yemen. Specifically, they claim that he presented a complaint against Riḍwān that allowed Murād to press Istanbul for Riḍwān's dismissal.[109] The Hijazi and Tihāma historians do not mention a qāḍī who negotiated for the Pasha and supposedly misrepresented Muṭahhar's case to him.

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[106] al-Nahrawālī, 165.
[107] al-Nahrawālī, 166. I have not yet been able to track an order that confirms this; instead, there is an order that confirms the expansion of the area under the control of the governor based in Ṣanʿāʾ. MD 5, #1236.
[108] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 162–64.
[109] al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 166–67.

How do we make sense of this discrepancy between the sources? The Zaydi historians, especially ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh who is the first historian to write about the qāḍī, might be adjusting the narrative for the Ottoman reader and actually presenting a case for the Zaydis. They are attempting to present an alternative version to Ottoman historians who see Muṭahhar as a rebellious type. The Hijazi sources, however, might be mistaken when they claim that Muṭahhar exploited the rift between Murād and Riḍwān, since, interestingly, the Zaydi historians, even ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh, know nothing about the division of Yemen into two beylerbeyliks; they assume that Murād just followed Riḍwān in the usual rotation.

Corruption and administrative division certainly worsened Ottoman positions in Yemen, but they are not sufficient explanations for the disintegration of Ottoman rule in the region in this period. In the following subsection I consider another aspect of political deterioration of Yemen as an Ottoman province – loss of trust. By focusing on relationships between Ottoman and local elites, we can trace how Ottoman officials, especially Riḍwān Pasha, who were seeking to enforce their positions in Yemen failed to align local elites, Zaydi and non-Zaydi, in support of the Ottoman administration. As a result, former allies turned to pre-Ottoman powerholders, namely, Muṭahhar b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, who were seen as more trustworthy.

Loss of trust

The only episode that both Zaydi and non-Zaydi sources agree on is the conflict in wādī al-Sirr over taxation. Once in Yemen, Riḍwān Pasha refused to adjust the *kharāj* of wādī al-Sirr, an *iltizām* (tax farm) of ʿAlī b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn.[110] In response to the locals murdering

[110] al-Nahrawālī, 165–66. Kānī Çelebi, *Bughyat al-khāṭir wa nuzhat al-nāẓir,* NF E.391.ar, ff. 127ab; Ibn Dāʿir, *al-Futūḥāt al-murādīya,* vol. 3, Raghib Pasha 979. Ibn Dāʿir, interestingly,

the *kāshif* appointed to collect taxes, Riḍwān Pasha started the military campaign against Muṭahhar, however, instead of deterrence this had the opposite effect. Shortly after that Ismāʿilī tribes started to look towards Muṭahhar rather than the Ottomans as their protector.[111] Issues with taxation and the economy were common in the region at this time. There were revolts in Jāzān, where the taxation regime was considered oppressive since the days of Qarāshāhīn Muṣṭafā Pasha.[112] Importantly, Qarashāhīn's policies led to the relocation of merchants from Jāzān to Ṣabyā.[113] Murād Pasha had to deal with these revolts.[114] The population of the recently conquered Ḥabb and Ibb would disperse whenever taxes were raised.[115] Coin debasement became so pervasive that the news reached the Ottoman center.[116] To make matters worse, the governorship of Riḍwān and Murād coincided with a devastating drought.[117] From Riḍwān's point of view, he was simply asserting Ottoman authority in the region. But to his Yemeni counterparts, his actions

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cites a fragment of the letter sent by Muṭahhar to Murād Pasha complaining about Riḍwān's actions and underlining Muṭahhar's support for the order of things set up by Özdemir Pasha.

[111] *Kānat min jumlat al-umūr allatī rāshat janāḥay Muṭahhar li-l-nuhūḍ ilā-l-muḥāraba … mayl al-ismāʿīlīya ilā Muṭahhar.* Ibn Dāʿir, *al-Futūḥāt al-murādīya,* vol. 3, Raghib Pasha 979.

[112] Predictably, local historians depict this pasha as a corrupt person. *kān sayyiʾ al-sīra sallaṭa al-kushshāfʿalā-l-raʿīya wa lam yaqbal fīhim shakīya wa kathurat fī ayyāmihi .. al-maẓālim*. A specific grievance was that the pasha did not appoint an auditor (*nāẓir*) to accompany the tax collectors, which, in the local view, led to the weakening of the state: *wa huwā awwal bāshā qallad al-kushshāf al-wilāya bi-lā nāẓir maʿahum … fa-ikḥtallat al-mamlaka bi-sabab dhālika.* Al-Ḍamadī, ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī, *al-ʿAqīq al-yamānī fī ḥawādith wa-wafayāt al-Mikhlāf al-Sulaymānī,* Library of King Saud University (KSUL) 7708, ff. 251-52.

[113] Al-Ḍamadī, *al-ʿAqīq al-yamānī,* KSUL 7708, ff. 252-53.

[114] Al-Ḍamadī, *al-ʿAqīq al-yamānī,* KSUL 7708, ff. 275-278, al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 171. The enmity of Jāzān towards the Turks dated back to 955/1548, when a certain amīr Farḥāt led a military campaign in the region as a result of which sharīf ʿAbd al-Wahhāb b. al-Mahdī al-Quṭbī, of the sayyid family ruling the area of Jāzān, Ṣabyā and Abū ʿArīsh, was killed. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Namāzī, *Khulāṣat al-silāf fī akhbār Ṣabyā wa-l-Mikhlāf*, ed. Darwīsh Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh M. al-Ahdal and Muḥammad Muḥammad ʿAfīf M. al-Ahdal (Ṣanʿāʾ: Maktabat Khālid bin al-Walīd; Dār al-Kutub al-Yamanīya, 2011), 71–72. As a result of Murād's actions, sharīf ʿĪsā b. al-Mahdī joined Muṭahhar that year. Al-Ḍamadī, ff. 278-79.

[115] MD 5, #1686.

[116] MD 5, #1687.

[117] Al-Ḍamadī, *al-ʿAqīq al-yamānī,* KSUL 7708, ff. 267-68.

amounted to a breach of an old agreement, and a refusal to take into consideration the special status of sayyids of the Sharaf al-Dīn family. This signaled to other Ottoman allies that their position within the status quo was also, potentially, open to review.

Ottoman documentation points to other kinds of issues as well: the governors were losing control of the numerous forts in the Yemeni highlands. There were not resources to maintain them, and they fell into disrepair. The fort wardens (*dizdār*, pl. *dizdārlar*) seem to have submitted multiple complaints to Istanbul that resulted in a direct order to the beylerbey of Yemen to provide the necessary support. Specifically, at least 20 forts were damaged by rain and needed repairs – this is about a third of the 66 forts mentioned in the register of Maḥmūd Pasha.[118] Mismanagement on such a scale points to the shrinking of Ottoman power in the region, possibly due to several factors that included a limited support base, limited financial and personnel resources, combined with internal administrative squabbles. Furthermore, this period was marked by the deaths of important Ottoman officials in Yemen. One such person was Behrām, the sanjaqbey of Ṣaʿda, who died in 973/1565. His efforts, based on the partial information that is available, were focused on two main areas: relations with local tribes and construction; he was probably also in charge of the forts connecting Ṣaʿda to the Tihāma. He was a respected person in the northern highlands.[119] His successor, Shāh ʿAlī bey, did not enjoy such local support and was pushed out of Ṣaʿda by the Banū Ḥubaysh and Banū al-Nāṣir in 974/1566.[120] Local support for the Ottomans was eroding.

The failure of trust networks at the local level is as important as the internal pressures of the Ottoman system. Ottoman governors failed to negotiate on several fronts – with the sayyids of

[118] MD 5, #1678 (dated 973/1565)
[119] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 161; al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 158. ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh stresses that he built many buildings in Ṣaʿda, while al-Nahrawālī underlines that he was feared by the "people of the mountains" (*ahl al-jibāl*).
[120] al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 171.

Kawkabān, a miscalculation that dates back to the governorship of Muṣṭafā Nashshār, and with the elites of Lower Yemen, in particular of Baʿdān, who in the days of Maḥmūd Pasha were integrated in the system but in 974/1566 were among the first to join Muṭahhar's revolt with the blessing of qāḍī ʿAbqara Aḥmad al-Yāfiʿī.[121] It is possible that even though Maḥmūd's campaign against the Āl al-Naẓārī had good reasons, his betrayal of the surrender agreement and execution of the family created a severe breach of trust that came to haunt subsequent governors. The mistake of Maḥmūd was that he executed the people who were the go-betweens of the Ottoman and Zaydi world at a time when Ottomans in Yemen were short of such connections.

In addition, Riḍwān incited internal conflict among the Ismāʿilīs and executed the shaykh of the Yām tribe, providing Muṭahhar with opportunities to expand the area under his control.[122] Finally, the ashrāf of the Jawf, including ʿAlī b. al-Shawīʿ, who were fully integrated into the Ottoman system, also turned against the Ottomans during Riḍwān's governorship.[123] This points to a general loss of trust between the conquerors and the conquered elites, a social process closely intertwined with the failure of the Ottomans to manage this distant province on their own, the overstretching of their personnel, and the mediocre negotiating skills of some governors who failed to recruit local elites as partners of the empire. Trust was lost to such an extent that in his

[121] al-Nahrawālī, 177–78. Al-Nahrawālī tries to discredit the qāḍī by claiming he was an astrologer. By the time of the appointment of Kuyucu Murād Pasha the Yāfiʿ tribe was once again in the Ottoman orbit and the very same people, like Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn al-Yāfiʿī, who had rebelled, were once again on the Ottoman payroll (see TSMA.d.161, f. 20a; TSMA.d.661, f. 20a; TSMA.d.182, f. 14b – all three registers from the time of Kuyucu Murād Pasha; and MAD.d.1382, f. 13 from the time of Yemenli Ḥasan Pasha).

[122] Al-Nahrawālī is the only source that reports that when Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh received a *sanjaq* from Riḍwān, his cousin (*ibn ʿamm*) was displeased by it and attacked his relative. Al-Nahrawālī does not pass judgment on this, since the Ismāʿilīs were cumbersome allies for the Ottomans. al-Nahrawālī, 169.

[123] TSMA.d.314, f. 20b. Murād Pasha leads a military campaign against ʿAlī al-Shawīʿ in dhu-l-qaʿda 974. al-Nahrawālī, 175.

negotiations with Muṭahhar, Riḍwān turned to the help of an outsider, a merchant, khwājā Muḥammad al-Makkī (son of khwājā Muḥiy al-dīn al-Lārī), the ambassador of the sharīf of Hijāz to India, who was passing through Aden on his mission.[124]

Further reasons for the loss of channels of trust are internal to the Ottoman system and include, for example, the lack of coordination between the two pashas. As has been remarked, initially Yemen was divided in such a way that some regions were first assigned to the beylerbey of Ṣanʿāʾ, then reassigned.[125] The issue was of course that the pashas had different orders in the beginning and had to sort out this issue on the spot. On top of squabbling about resources and military divisions, this could result in double taxation. The fast rotation of governors and their top officers was possibly another issue. In Ottoman Yemen in this period only those governors who stayed for longer periods or succeeded in transferring the post to their "trainees" were able to maintain stronger local connections. This is a pattern that repeated itself after the 'golden age' of Ottoman rule in Yemen discussed further in this chapter.

Reestablishing trust (1569-1571)

The murder of Murād Pasha in Yemen was the last straw that led to the campaign to reconquer it. Murād, a former sanjaqbey in Gaza and a relative of Lala Muṣṭafā Pasha, was probably representing the Sokollu party in Yemen.[126] Despite his efforts to appease the Yemenis, he had the

[124] al-Nahrawālī, 171.
[125] al-Nahrawālī, 166–67.
[126] al-Nahrawālī, 159, 163. Kānī Çelebi, *Bughyat al-khāṭir wa nuzhat al-nāẓir,* NF E.391.ar, f. 125b. al-Nahrawālī writes that Murād was somehow related to Lālā Muṣṭafā Pasha. However, one source claims that he was a devşirme recruit from Kurdistan. Mehmed Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmanî*, ed. Nuri Akbayar, Eski yazıdan yeni yazıya ; 1; Tarih Vakfı Yurt yayınları ; 30 (Beşiktaş, Istanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı ile Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı'nın ortak yayınıdır, 1996), vol. 4, p. 1115.

misfortune of being the second governor after Üweys Pasha to be murdered. It seems that he believed (or at least wrote documents to this end) that Muṭahhar was not actually revolting and Riḍwān was unnecessarily harsh towards the Zaydis. Al-Nahrawālī implies that he did not actually believe Muṭahhar, but used the opportunity to petition the Porte, jointly with his ally Maḥmūd Pasha of Egypt, for the removal of Riḍwān.[127] Rus Ḥasan Pasha, who was appointed to the Upper Yemen governorship in replacement of Riḍwān, did not have the resources to stop the disintegration of the provinces. By the time he arrived in Yemen, the Zaydis and their allies had already advanced to Taʿizz and Aden. The death of Murād Pasha is presented in several sources as the reason for the start of the reconquest campaign; his connection to Lala Muṣṭafā Pasha placed the sultan's favorite in a good position to claim the leadership of the campaign.[128]

One is struck by both the speed with which the Ottoman system fell apart in Yemen and the swiftness with which the Ottoman state mobilized for this reconquest. Riḍwān Pasha reached Ṣanʿāʾ in rabīʿ al-thānī 973 / December 1565. Eighteen months later, in dhū-l-ḥijja 974 / June 1567 Murād Pasha was murdered. In ṣafar 975 / August 1567 the Porte acknowledged the gravity of the crisis in Yemen,[129] and by jumādā al-thānī 975 / December 1567 the military campaign was already in preparation.[130] This campaign has received much scholarly attention since it was a manifestation

[127] al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 173.
[128] Âli, *Künhü'l-ahbâr*, 431a.al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 181. Interestingly, al-Nahrawālī connects the murder of Murād by the Yemenis to revenge; he claims that the pasha was killed by a man whose relative was executed thirty years earlier by Khādim Sulaymān Pasha in Aden.
[129] MD 7, #44. The order is still addressed to Murād Pasha. This timeline also indicates that al-Nahrawālī's insinuations that Maḥmūd Pasha of Egypt was not informing the Porte of the crisis in Yemen and that this information was released only after his death are not well-founded. Maḥmūd Pasha died in December 1567, after the preparations for the expedition to Yemen started. On al-Nahrawālī's claim that the Pasha was withholding information see al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 198.
[130] A series of orders on the "team" of Lala Muṣṭafā Pasha: MD 7, ## 584, 585, 589, 592, 593; and their provisions to be prepared by the sharīf of Mecca and bey of Jidda: MD 7, ## 595, 596.

of the transformation of the central Ottoman administration at the time and a case study of political intrigue. The ambitions of Mehmed Sokollu Pasha, the intrigues between Lala Mustafa Pasha, who was initially appointed to lead the campaign, and Koca Sinan Pasha, the powerful governor of Egypt who took it over, and the fate of Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha who was forced to abandon his appointment in Yemen, have all been scrutinized in detail.[131] What is important about the reconquest is that it reconfigured Ottoman relations with the local elites. In this section I will focus on the methods that the Ottomans employed (aside from military intervention) to reestablish relations of trust in Yemen.

The importance of establishing new trust relationships is visually represented in the famous illustrated copy of Muṣṭafā Rumūzī's *Feṭḥ-nāme-i Yemen,* produced under the patronage of Koca Sinān Pasha. Out of the 88 miniatures in the manuscript, at least 14 represent negotiations, gift exchanges, and public expressions of loyalty. Several Yemeni elite groups are depicted in these miniatures. One group of elites with which the Ottoman reestablished relationships were the tribes. Two miniatures depict the expressions of allegiance of the tribes of Jabal Tays and the reward of the loyalty of the shaykhs of the tribes of Ḥayma with gifts.[132] Another group who were central to the reestablishment of Ottoman rule in the region were the Āl Shams al-Dīn; the new agreements

[131] Blackburn, "The Collapse of Ottoman Authority"; Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 131–32, 142–43; Emine Fetvacı, *Picturing History at the Ottoman Court* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2013), 220–25; Hulûsi, *Yemen'de Osmanlı idâresi ve Rumûzî târihi (923-1012/1517-1604)*, cxiii–clx; Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Âli (1541-1600)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 45–54; Salih Özbaran, "Ottoman Expansion in the Red Sea," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey. Volume 2: The Ottoman Empire as a World Power, 1453–1603*, ed. Kate Fleet and Suraiya Faroqhi (Cambridge University Press, 2012); Sālim, *al-Fatḥ al-ʿuthmānī al-awwal li-l-Yaman. 1538-1635*, 235–86; Clive Smith, "Kawkabān, the Key to Sinān Pasha's Campaign in the Yemen (March 1569 - March 1571)," *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 32 (2002): 287–94.

[132] IUK T 6045, miniatures on ff. 249b, 254b.

concluded with them as well as the ensuing exchange of gifts are depicted in three miniatures.[133] Finally, a set of miniatures depict the surrender of forts through *amān* agreements, another method of reestablishing trust in the region.[134] These episodes in the reconquest of Yemen indicate that what was at stake for the Ottomans in the region was not the sweeping punishment of those who revolted, but the reintegration of the region into the empire.

Preliminary outreach

The negotiation principle comes across in the Ottoman strategy at an early stage. Shortly after Lala Muṣṭafā's appointment to lead the campaign, he wrote a letter to Muṭahhar that he sent to him via the sharīf of Mecca, requesting the sharīf to also write a letter to Muṭahhar.[135] Out of the two letters, al-Nahrawālī cites the letter of the sharīf of Mecca to Muṭahhar. This letter offered Muṭahhar a way out of the conflict. It suggested an interpretation of events, in which Muṭahhar was simply protecting the sultanic lands from corruption and disintegration that were to be blamed upon the tribes: "It is clear that these offenses were set up by riffraff wretches and stray Bedouin misled by the devil and who deem wrong-doing light. When you saw the disorder in the land and the endeavors of the corrupt in it, you worked to safeguard the sultanic kingdom and to hold it and protect it from those who wanted to corrupt it. You achieved that by heading there, protecting the *sanjaqbeys* of the sultan from the Bedouin and by defending their lives from the ignorant and those revolting. You took under your control the weapons and the forts protecting them from waste that

[133] IUK T 6045, miniatures on ff. 520b, 523a, 530a.
[134] IUK T 6045, miniatures on ff. 310b (Shibām Ḥarāz), 311b (Khaddād banī Qawī), 312b (Radmān), 318a (Qaʿba).
[135] al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 199–204. The letter is dated 11 ramaḍān 975 / March 19, 1568. The letter has been analyzed by Sālim, who suggested that even though it represented a positive attempt at diplomacy, it in fact demonstrated the weakness of the Ottoman position. Sālim, *al-Fatḥ al-ʿuthmānī al-awwal li-l-Yaman. 1538-1635*, 241–42.

would have resulted had the ignorant and the riffraff got hold of them. You protected all this until the time when he upon whom the sultan and the deputies of the sultanic threshold rely on returns and then you will hand over all that you protected and took hold of to him."[136]

For intimidation purposes, the forces of the Ottomans were described in detail in this letter, mentioning the different military units and the number of soldiers in them, but the sharīf of Mecca suggested that if Muṭahhar presented his apology to the Porte through him with haste, he would avoid the inevitable military conflict.[137] In the absence of the letter of Muṣṭafā Pasha to the sharīf (what instructions did the sharīf get? Was he within his rights to offer such an escape plan to Muṭahhar?) and the letter of Lala Muṣṭafā Pasha to Muṭahhar (was it the same or a harsher ultimatum?), it is hard to contextualize this document, even though there is no reason to doubt its authenticity. Nevertheless, the attempt to reestablish a relationship of trust is present and the only mistake that was made in it was that Muṭahhar was treated as a separate actor from the tribes.[138] Had the letter acknowledged the interconnectedness of Muṭahhar's political order and the Yemeni tribes and offered an exit path for them as well, perhaps the campaign would have been replaced by a parade of agreements. Muṭahhar's laconic response did not indicate that the Ottoman search for

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[136] al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 201–2. *al-ẓāhir anna hādhihi-l-faḍāʾiḥ wa-l-qabāʾiḥ al-fawādiḥ innamā ṣadarat ʿan ghawghāʾ al-ashqiyāʾ wa ghuwāt al-ʿurbān mimman istaghwāhum al-shayṭān wa-istakhfahum [?] al-baghy wa-l-ṭughyān wa annakum lammā raʾaytum ikhtilāl al-bilād wa saʿy al-mufsidīn fī-l-arḍ bi-l-fasād qaṣadtum ḥifẓ al-mamlaka al-sharīfa al-sulṭānīya wa-l-istilāʾ ʿalayhā wa ṣawnahā ʿamman yurīd al-ifsād fīhā bi-l-tawajjuh ilayhā wa ḥirāsat umarāʾ al-sanājiq al-sulṭānīya wa ḥifẓihim min al-ʿurbān wa-l-ibqāʾ ʿalā muhajihim ʿan jahalat al-badw wa ahl al-ʿiṣyān wa waḍaʿtum yadakum ʿalā-l-ʿudad wa-l-ālāt wa-l-ḥuṣūn wa-l-qilāʿ ḥifẓan lahā ʿan al-ḍiyāʿ bi-tamazzuqihā bi-aydī al-jahala wa-l-ruʿāʿ wa ṣuntum jamīʿ dhālika ilā an yarudd man yuʿtamad ʿalayhi min al-ḥaḍra al-sharīfa al-sulṭānīya wa nuwwāb aʿtābihā al-munīfa al-khāqānīya fa-tusallimūn jamīʿ mā ṣuntumūhu ilayhi wa dafaʿtum lahu kullamā waḍaʿtum min dhālika yadakum ʿalayhi.*

[137] al-Nahrawālī, 202–3.

[138] On the political role of tribal elites in the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate see chapter 1.

allies in Yemen was a lost cause, it only indicated that Muṭahhar could not become one of them.[139] Osman Özdemiroğlu's efforts in the region demonstrate how the policy of reestablishing trust was adjusted in light of this information.

What did Osman Özdemiroğlu Pasha achieve?

Appointing Osman Özdemiroğlu Pasha to lead the operations on the ground in Yemen was not a bad idea. He was born and raised in Egypt, and the Red Sea region was a familiar space to him, as he had accompanied his father on his appointment to Abyssinia.[140] Not only could he rely on his father's experience, but he also had under his command the *kethüda* who had served his father in Yemen.[141] After his arrival in coastal Yemen in jumādā al-thānī 976/ November – December 1568, Osman Özdemiroğlu Pasha reached Taʿizz by rajab 976/January 1569, and sieged its fort al-Qāhira.[142] ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh analyzes this Pasha's campaign in Taʿizz in great detail and reaches the conclusion that he was a superior military commander to Muṭahhar and his allies.[143]

However, the governor was not making advances to reestablish relations with the local elites in Yemen. This is particularly visible in the debates that ensued between him and Koca Sinān Pasha, who took over the leadership of the campaign by January 1569, about the fate of those besieged in al-Qāhira of Taʿizz. Osman Pasha thought that they should be executed, but Koca Sinān Pasha advocated for imprisonment and negotiations.[144] The inflexibility of Osman Pasha

[139] Muṭahhar's response: al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 204.
[140] Kemal Çiçek, "Osman Paşa, Özdemiroğlu (ö. 993/1585)," in *Islam Ansiklopedisi*, 2007.
[141] A certain Çakal Aḥmed. al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 205.
[142] The date of Osman Özdemiroğlu's arrival in coastal Yemen is provided in *Rawḥ al-rūḥ.* Al-Nahrawālī only writes about the siege of the Taʿizz fort in January 1569. Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 176; al-Nahrawālī, *al-Barq al-yamānī*, 207.
[143] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 178.
[144] Ibn Luṭfallāh, 180; Ibn al-Qāsim, *Ghāyat al-amānī fī akhbār al-quṭr al-yamānī*, 734. This version is present only in Zaydi sources; al-Nahrawālī and Ottoman historians after him suggest that

played into the hands of Koca Sinān, who then promptly removed him from the campaign and forced him to leave Yemen. With this removal, the policy of military actions in combination with negotiations, rather than retaliatory practices, took hold of the expedition to Yemen and as will be demonstrated ensured its long-term success.

Koca Sinān Pasha's strategy

Koca Sinān's strategy in Yemen was a combination of negotiations and military action. This was not simply a punitive campaign, but an attempt to restore order, which entailed reestablishing local alliances. It is most probably his training in the Enderūn and his political ambitions that influenced his approach to Yemen's problems; unlike Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha, Koca Sinān was a man of court politics above everything else, and it is his political talents that brought him the position of grand vizier (*sadr aʿẓam*) five times in his career.[145]

Amān and the surrender of forts

The use of *amān*, an invitation to surrender and be forgiven, or a pledge of security, was Koca Sinān's main political tool during his campaign in Yemen. The first *amān* was issued in Jāzān, where the Pasha arrived at the end of ramaḍān 976 / March 1569.[146] He then used the same

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the conflict between the two happened due to Osman's refusal to join the operations under the command of Koca Sinān. Quṭb al-Dīn al-Nahrawālī, *Lightning over Yemen. A History of the Ottoman Campaign, 1569-71*, trans. Clive Smith (London / New York: I.B.Tauris, 2002), 33–34. Ottoman sources also claim that Koca Sinān Pasha wrote an order on a tughra-bearing sheet of paper provided to him for the campaign to execute Osman Pasha. Hulûsi, *Yemen'de Osmanlı idâresi ve Rumûzî târihi (923-1012/1517-1604)*, vol. 1, p. cxliii.

[145] For a succinct biography of Koca Sinan Pasha reconstructing his entire career see Mehmed İpşirli, "Koca Sinan Paşa," in *Islam Ansiklopedisi*, 2002.

[146] Al-Ḍamadī, f. 287; al-Nahrawālī, *Lightning over Yemen. A History of the Ottoman Campaign, 1569-71*, 20–21; Hulûsi, *Yemen'de Osmanlı idâresi ve Rumûzî târihi (923-1012/1517-1604)*, vol. 1, pp. 218–19.

tool in dealing with the siege of al-Qāhira of Taʿizz that had started a few months before his arrival; there he offered a path towards negotiations to the commander of the fort, Ṣalāḥ al-Hamdānī, to whom he sent Rus Ḥasan Pasha and the Ismāʿīlī dāʿī ʿAbdallāh.[147] In this way, the pasha renewed the connections with the Ismāʿīlīs. Even in forts that initially resisted the expedition, like Taʿkar, the Pasha opted for *amān* as long as the besieged took the initiative in asking for it.[148] The Pasha's policy was highly effective in Ṣanʿāʾ, where he offered the population security in exchange for surrender.[149] Unfortunately, no documents revealing the conditions of such agreements in Yemen survive.[150] But from descriptions of what happened in locations that did not receive such protections, one can surmise that basic respect for the property of the population and guarantees of order were at the heart of these agreements.[151]

There were only a few locations where no *amān* was issued and no mercy was offered to the Zaydis resisting the Ottomans. Baḥrāna, Khadīd, Fahad and Mudawwara near Ḥabb and other

[147] al-Nahrawālī, *Lightning over Yemen. A History of the Ottoman Campaign, 1569-71*, 26–29.
[148] al-Nahrawālī, 54.
[149] Al-Nahrawālī does not mention this preliminary negotiation of the Pasha, but ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh and other Zaydi historians do; they call the document that was issued a *marsūm*. al-Nahrawālī, 66–67; Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 183; Ibn al-Qāsim, *Ghāyat al-amānī fī akhbār al-quṭr al-yamānī*, 736.
[150] This is not the case with *amān-nāmes* issued by the Ottomans in Europe and the Balkans that are preserved in large numbers. See for example an edition of seventeenth century *amān*s to several monasteries in Srem (Serbia): Aleksandar Fotić, "Институтција амана и примање подаништва у Османском царству: пример сремских манастира 1693-1696 (Institutcija amana i primanje podaništva u Osmanskom carstvu: primer sremskih manastira 1693-1696)," *Историјски часопис / Historical Review*, no. 52 (2005): 221–51. On the circulation of Ottoman documents in Franciscan monasteries see Ana Sekulić, "From a Legal Proof to a Historical Fact: Trajectories of an Ottoman Document in a Franciscan Monastery, Sixteenth to Twentieth Century," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 62, no. 5–6 (November 12, 2019): 925–62.
[151] The town of Shibām above which the fort of Kawkabān towers is one example of an urban center that did not receive an *amān.* There doors were taken from the houses to be used as firewood, and the residents were forced to abandon their homes. al-Nahrawālī, *Lightning over Yemen. A History of the Ottoman Campaign, 1569-71*, 72.

forts of Mt. Baʿdān, as well as Khawlān, Ḥabb al-ʿArūs near Thulā, and Dūrām are some such locations.[152] Not coincidentally, these forts were razed to the ground to prevent their future use. This shows that the decision not to provide an *amān* to their defenders was as much a show of military strength as a ploy to prevent any residents from staying in the area and thereby facilitating the elimination of these unruly fortifications.

Agreements with the tribes and gift exchange

The policy of *amān* turned out especially beneficial for Ottoman dealings with the highland tribes. The policy of the Pasha vis-à-vis the tribes was that he encouraged them to reach out to him and acknowledged their attitude with gifts. While al-Ḍamadī only informs us about the passing of the Pasha through Jāzān, al-Nahrawālī reports that the tribes of Ṣabyā used this opportunity to express their loyalty and were rewarded for this with robes (pl. *khilaʿ*) and other gifts.[153] Similar exchanges happened between Koca Sinān and the tribes of Jibla, Ibb, Jabal Tays, Ḥayma and Ḥarāz who chose to pledge allegiance to the Ottomans.[154]

Central to Koca Sinān Pasha's success with the Arab tribes was the reestablishment of the connection with the Ismāʿīlīs. The amīr ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl, whom al-Nahrawālī and Zaydi sources call the *dāʿī,* travelled through Ḥarāz and Ḥayma bringing the revolting tribes to submission on behalf of the Ottoman Pasha.[155] His mission to appease the region between Ṣanʿāʾ and the Tihāma was successful due to his family's association with the Ismāʿīlī daʿwa and the

[152] al-Nahrawālī, 64,68-69, 72, 80, 92; Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 182; Ibn al-Qāsim, *Ghāyat al-amānī fī akhbār al-quṭr al-yamānī*, 735.
[153] al-Nahrawālī, *Lightning over Yemen. A History of the Ottoman Campaign, 1569-71*, 21.
[154] al-Nahrawālī, 53, 63, 94, 95, 111–13.
[155] al-Nahrawālī, 92–95.

recognition of his leadership over the Hamdān tribe.[156] His connections in bilād Banī Ismāʿīl made possible the re-establishment of the land connection between Ṣanʿāʾ and Ḥudayda.[157] His message of Ottoman forgiveness was also welcomed by tribes with Zaydi allegiances, possibly due to the promise of tax relief as well as expectations of reinvigorated trade.[158] The key in this latter conversation seems to be connected with the amīr's visits to Sūq Qifāf, a trading post in the Shahāra region that later became an important coffee-producing area. All this established a favorable policy precedent for the Ottomans.

However, not all tribes in this region agreed to negotiate their place in the new Ottoman system through the Ismāʿīlīs. Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Nuzaylī, who was representing some tribes of Jabal Tays, travelled to meet Koca Sinān in person to receive assurance regarding the future of his people.[159] Another big success that was not connected to the efforts of the Ismāʿīlīs was the reestablishment of relations with the sayyids of the Jawf, a beneficial development for any future strategy to control Ṣaʿda. Thus, through a policy of open doors, public ceremonies of loyalty expression and gift exchange Koca Sinān laid the foundation for stable relationships in the region.

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[156] Traboulsi, "The Ottoman Conquest of Yemen: The Ismaili Perspective," 51–52.
[157] al-Nahrawālī, *Lightning over Yemen. A History of the Ottoman Campaign, 1569-71*, 207 (fn. 24).
[158] al-Nahrawālī, 94. Al-Nahrawālī lists eight tribes that accepted the invitation to join the Ottomans on condition of a two-year period of tax relief. Among these tribes was the Banū al-Walīd, a subgroup of the Marhiba, a tribe that joined the Qasimid uprising in 1008/1599. Al-Sharafī, NF C.101.ar, f. 160a; Ibrāhīm Aḥmad al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam al-buldān wa-l-qabāʾil al-yamanīya* (Ṣanʿāʾ / Beirut: Dār al-kalima li-l-ṭibāʿa wa-l-nashr wa-l-tawzīʿ / al-Muʾassasa al-jāmiʿīya li-l-dirāsāt wa-l-nashr wa-l-tawzīʿ, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 1495, 1888.
[159] Possibly, he is a member of the Āl al-Nuzaylī who are originally from al-Maḥwit, a region in the heart of Jabal Tays and Ḥayma. al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 2, pp. 1731–32.

The agreement with the Āl Shams al-Dīn of Kawkabān

The crowning achievement of Koca Sinan's campaign in Yemen was the agreements with the Āl Shams al-Dīn of Kawkabān. This alliance became central to the new Ottoman regime in the Yemeni highlands, as this Zaydi family came to replace the Ismāʿīlīs as a key partner in negotiations with the northern regions and their elites, of both sayyid and tribal background.

By the time negotiations with Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn began, it became clear that the Ottoman campaign was running out of steam. Even with some allies deserting him, Muṭahhar b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn resisted direct Ottoman attacks on Thulā from August 1569 till May 1570. At the same time, the previously subdued areas slowly started to revolt again.[160] Negotiations with Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn became possible when he released from imprisonment several top-ranking Ottomans who had been captured in the last days of Murād Pasha. The release of these prisoners, rather than their execution, showed that the Zaydi sayyid was open to negotiations. In addition, Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn had sought paths to negotiations through the Ismāʿīlī dāʿī.[161]

The agreement made further expressions of loyalty possible. After Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn paved the way, Muṭahhar signed an agreement (*ṣulḥ*) with Koca Sinān. This was followed by the initiative of Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn b. ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Muʾayyadī of Ṣaʿda, who likewise reached out to Koca Sinān requesting a peace treaty and a guarantee that he would be allowed to retain control of Ṣaʿda.[162] The conclusion of the campaign coincided with the surrender of the fort of Ḥabb in December 1570 to the newly appointed Behrām Pasha, who proved that he would continue

[160] There was unrest in Ṣanʿāʾ and in the areas near Taʿizz and Mt. Baʿdān. The fort of Ḥabb only fell to the Ottomans in December 1570.
[161] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 187.
[162] Al-Ḍamadī, *al-ʿAqīq al-yamānī,* ff. 387-388. This episode is not mentioned by either al-Nahrawālī or ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh. ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh claimed that in accordance with the agreement with Koca Sinān control over Ṣaʿda remained in the hands of Muṭahhar. Ibn Luṭfallāh, 190.

to rule Yemen along the lines of Koca Sinān's policy by offering an *amān* to its defenders, led by ʿAlī b. Shams al-Dīn.[163]

The resulting special alliance between the sayyid family and the Ottomans is highly reminiscent of the agreements binding the Crimean khans or the Kurdish rulers on the Safavid border to the Ottomans.[164] Like their Crimean and Kurdish counterparts, the Āl Shams al-Dīn were combining a degree of independence, especially in questions of transfer of power, with Ottoman control of their foreign policy and to some extent domestic affairs. As a result of Koca Sinān Pasha's campaign, the Āl Shams al-Dīn became central to the success of the Ottoman administration in the region, replacing the Ismāʿīlī dāʿī and Ismāʿīlī tribal shaykhs, who, as the Ottomans started to realize, were becoming marginal in Yemeni politics.[165]

All in all, Koca Sinān Pasha's campaign in Yemen, while not being the military success that historians like al-Nahrawālī want to make it look, was an achievement of Ottoman diplomacy that inaugurated a new era in Yemen.

The 'golden age' of Ottoman Yemen (1571-1622)

The five decades following Koca Sinān Pasha's expedition to Yemen can rightfully be called the golden age of Ottoman Yemen.[166] This is not the least due to the rule of the Yemenli

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[163] Ibn Dāʿir, *al-Futūḥāt al-murādīya,* vol. 3, Raghib Pasha 979.
[164] Natalia Królikowska, "Sovereignty and Subordination in Crimean-Ottoman Relations (Sixteenth–Eighteenth Centuries)," in *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Brill, 2013), 43–65; Murat Yaşar and Chong Jin Oh, "The Ottoman Empire and the Crimean Khanate in the North Caucasus: A Case Study of Ottoman-Crimean Relations in the Mid-Sixteenth Century," *Turkish Historical Review* 9, no. 1 (May 10, 2018): 86–103; Mustafa Dehqan and Vural Genç, "Kurdish Emirs in the 16th-Century Ruus Registers," *Der Islam* 96, no. 1 (April 9, 2019): 87–120.
[165] Traboulsi, "The Ottoman Conquest of Yemen: The Ismaili Perspective," 52–54.
[166] *Al-ʿAqīq al-yamānī* counts the period of plenty from the arrival of Behrām Pasha in Yemen till 1013/1604. Al-Ḍamadī, ff. 295-96. The 'golden age' was also directly related to the trade

Ḥasan Pasha group, which included Ḥasan Pasha himself and his three protégés. These governors were characterized by a profound knowledge of Yemeni affairs, since Yemenli Ḥasan Pasha trained his successors. Most of the governors of the 'golden age' stayed in Yemen for prolonged periods (five or more years). This change in length of tenure had a positive effect on the level of understanding from both sides of what the Ottoman provincial system entailed. The professional qualities of the pashas and their level of knowledge about local conditions, especially in the group of governors associated with Yemenli Ḥasan Pasha, seem to have been a crucial improvement for the integration of Yemen into the Ottoman Empire.[167] Finally, the governors of Yemen got full autonomy in their decisions. A document, uncovered by Yavuz Hulusi, explicitly states that Yemen is too far from the metropole to control (*südde-i saʿādetimden baʿīd olmağla*), hence the decisions and requests of Yemeni pashas need to be met by the governor of Egypt without additional referrals to Istanbul.[168] The additional referral to which the document alludes was effectively a tool for Egyptian governors to stall Yemeni initiative and overtake decision-making. With the removal of this administrative caveat, Yemeni governors were recognized as the only party responsible for local affairs and were able to fully focus on internal affairs, without worrying about outside intrigue.

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boom in the Red Sea region. Tuchscherer, "Commerce et production du café en mer Rouge au XVIe siècle," 78–83.

[167] It is also possible that Kuyucu Murād Pasha was aware of Yemeni affairs prior to his appointment, due to his association with Maḥmūd Pasha. Ömer Işbilir, "Kuyucu Murad Paşa," in *Islam Ansiklopedisi*, 2002.

[168] "Whichever request <comes> from the beylerbey of Yemen, on the ground that he needs to submit a request to my high Porte …; after you speedily send [what is requested], then submit a detailed report (?) to the threshold of our happiness." *Yemen beğlerbeği … ṭarafından her ne taleb olunursa dergāh-i muʿallama ʿarza muḥtājdir demeyüb … ber wejh-i istiʿjāl irsāl eyledükden ṣonra südde-i saʿādatime mufaṣṣalan ʿarz idesin.* MD 26, # 231 dated 982/1574, transliterated in Hulûsi, *Yemen'de Osmanlı idâresi ve Rumûzî târihi (923-1012/1517-1604)*, vol. 1, p. xcv.

Name	Dates in office	Notes
Behrām Pasha	(978-983/1570-1575)	Son of Qarashāhīn Muṣṭafā Pasha
Muṣṭafā Pasha	(983/1575, d. that year)	
Kuyucu Murād Pasha	(983-988/1576-1581)	Protégé and son-in-law of Maḥmūd Pasha
Yemenli Ḥasan Pasha	(989-1013/1580-1604)	
Sinān Pasha	(1013-1016/1604-1607)	Protégé of Yemenli Ḥasan Pasha
Jaʿfer Pasha	(1016-1021/1607-1612, then until 1616)	Protégé of Yemenli Ḥasan Pasha
Ibrāhīm Pasha	(1022/1613, d. that year)	
Muḥammad Rāghib Pasha	(1026-1028*/1617-1621)	Protégé of Yemenli Ḥasan Pasha

Table 3. List of Ottoman governors, 1570-1621.

The turn towards local elites

The first governor of this subperiod, Behrām Pasha, proceeded to build on the achievements of Koca Sinān. He started by lowering taxes and encouraging those who left their area of residence to return and resume their affairs.[169] His focus seems to have been on the reconstruction of Lower Yemen. Our understanding of Behrām Pasha's policies might be distorted by the fact that the main narrative source for his time in office was composed by a Zabīdī historian who paid special attention to the activities of the Pasha in his home area. For instance, he provides detailed information about qāḍī Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Tabrīzī who was tasked by the Pasha with surveying date palms in Zabīd and Mawzaʿ, and overseeing the distribution of charity (*ṣadaqa*) payments to the scholars (*fuqahāʾ*) of the town.[170] Behrām Pasha could also have contributed to the reinvigoration of coffee production and trade in Yemen.[171] While we do not have as much

[169] Al-Ḍamadī, *al-ʿAqīq al-yamānī,* ff. 294-95 (citing the order of Behrām Pasha).
[170] *Bulūgh al-marām,* BNF Ar. 1651, ff. 69b-70a, 71a-73a, 82b-83a.
[171] Interestingly, contemporary local Yemeni sources do not write at all about Ottomans and coffee in this period, even though the plant was cultivated for local consumption and export in several highland regions, including Jabal Ṣabir near Taʿizz and Bilād Ānis. A record from the

information about Behrām Pasha's activities further north, we can assume that some similarities were present. He also moved the Ottoman administrative center out of Dhamār and Ṣanʿāʾ to the newly built town of Malḥaẓ.[172] The importance of the new capital was asserted through coins that were minted there.[173] And while Ibn Dāʿir, another Yemeni historian, asserts that Behrām Pasha was a bloody tyrant who executed many of the people who were found to be associated with Muṭahhar's revolt, it seems more plausible that he managed to return the region to a state of relative peace.

Behrām Pasha's time in office in Yemen is documented in two *defters* – TSMA.d.2893 and TSMA.d.671. Both registers are classified as *esāmi defteri* and are focused on the structure of the Ottoman army in Yemen, providing the names of people assigned into particular military units, their places of service and salaries. The postings of Ottoman officers, like the *çavuşān,* can be used to consider where Ottoman forces were concentrated. The *çavuşan* listed in TSMA.d.2893 were positioned in Bayt al-Faqīh, Ṣanʿāʾ, Taʿizz, Baʿdān, Ḥujayrīya, Jabal Buraʿ, Mawzaʿ, Milḥān,

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Egyptian archives shows that Ḥasan Pasha profited from coffee trade. See discussion in Tuchscherer, "Commerce et production du café en mer Rouge au XVIe siècle," 83–84. Michel Tuchscherer suggests that at least some of the demand for coffee in this period was covered by production in Ethiopia. He also notes that coffee trade picked up in the concluding decades of the sixteenth century, if one considers Egyptian records. Michel Tuchscherer, "Coffee in the Red Sea Area from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century," in *The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 1500–1989*, ed. Steven Topik and William Gervase Clarence-Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 52. A *defter* from Mocha dated 990/1582 mentions (if my reading is correct) a shipment of coffee beans (*bunn*) to Suvays. TSMA.d.5801, f. 3b (*maṣraf al-bunn al-muttajar ilā bandar al-Suways*).

[172] This city seems to have been located in the vicinity of Dhamār. No record of the city is preserved in sources other than *Bulūgh. Bulūgh,* BNF Arabe 1651, ff. 67ab; an unparalleled analysis of this source's information on Malḥaẓ is Aḥmad Ṣāliḥ ʿAbdrabbihi al-Miṣrī, "Madīnat Malḥaẓ 'Dhamār al-ṣughrā' markaz ḥukm wilāyat al-Yaman fī ʿahd al-wālī al-ʿuthmānī Bahrām Bāshā (978-983 H / 1570-75 M)," *al-Iklīl: majalla dawrīya tuʿnā bi-tārīkh al-Yaman al-fikrī wa-l-ḥaḍārī* 33–34 (June 2009): 98.

[173] Ibn Dāʿir, *al-Futūḥāt al-murādīya,* vol. 3, Raghib Pasha 979.

Masār, Radāʿ, Aden, Jibla, and Zabīd.[174] The list of officers is probably incomplete in this defter, so to fully assess the locations of Ottoman forces, we need to take the placement of other military units the *gönüllüyān* and *mustaḥfiẓān*, into consideration. These were additionally posted in Bilād Ānis, Raymat al-Mikhlāf, ʿArūs Kawkabān, Taʿkar, ʿAmmār, Ḥabb, Yarīm, Mocha, and Dinwah. The second register confirms this list of locations, adding to it Dhamār and Khawlān.[175] This shows that Ottoman forces were predominantly concentrated in Lower Yemen, and, aside from ʿArūs Kawkabān, the fort that was wrestled out of the hands of the Āl Sharaf al-Dīn during the campaign of Koca Sinān, there were no postings north of Ṣanʿāʾ. This was one of the reasons why in 982/1574 the call for the imamate of Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Dāwud al-Muʾayyadī became possible in the mountains of al-Ahnūm.[176]

However, the same register shows how the Ottoman policy adjusted in this period to ensure a qualitatively different control of the region. The register contains lists of *müteferriqa-i Yemen* that reveal the extent of the incorporation of local elites into the Ottoman order after Koca Sinān's campaign. The 269 men listed as *müteferriqa-i Yemen* include tribal leaders and sayyids, as well as Ottoman officials. Especially prominent are the shaykhs of Dinwah (15 people),[177] the tribal leaders of Bilād Ānis (3) and Jibla (2), members of the Āl Sharaf al-Dīn (in particular, ʿAbd al-Quddūs b. Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn who was forced to move to Ṣanʿāʾ as a hostage and the

[174] TSMA.d.2893 is not paginated.
[175] TSMA.d.671, ff. 18a-29a (placements of the *mustaḥfiẓān*).
[176] The other reason was that Muṭahhar, a formidable Zaydi political leader, died in 980, and no equally charismatic leader arose among the Āl Sharaf al-Dīn. After his death the shaykhs of al-Ahnūm who were his hostages were released in a generous but ill-conceived move of his son. Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 200.
[177] The Dinwah in question is probably the fort located in Rayma, a mountainous region near Wuṣāb, towering over Bayt al-Faqīh in Tihāma. One of the shaykhs on the list has the nisba al-Sihāmī, after wādī Sihām that flows from the mountains to the Tihāma and passes through Rayma. al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 1, pp. 625, 723, 822.

cousin of Muṭahhar, Ḥasan b. Ḥusayn), and Ismāʿīlīs (including Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Dāʿī and Jaʿfar b. ʿAbdallāh al-Dāʿī). The exact status of these people is unclear. About some of them, for example ʿAbd al-Quddūs, we know that they were hostages. It is attested in many sources that the Ottomans took hostages from the Yemeni tribes that they subjugated. However, it is also possible that some of the tribal leaders and sayyids on this list were simply receiving payment for their services. For example, shaykh Wahhās ʿIzzī of Bilād Ānis helped Behrām Pasha expand his control over the region of wādī Simāh; he was not a hostage himself, on the contrary, in the days of Ḥasan Pasha he held a tax farm, *iltizām,* in Maghrib Ānis.[178] Similarly, Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Ḥajarī and his father shaykh ʿAbd al-Wahhāb were actively working with the Ottoman administration.[179] This allows us to interpret the information from the *müteferriqa* lists as indicative of the integration of Yemeni elites into the Ottoman system rather than as lists of prisoners.

One of the few dark spots on Behrām Pasha's record in Yemen was the conflict with his army over salary payments, and disagreements with his *defterdār*.[180] The conflict was further exacerbated when Behrām learned of the death of Muṣṭafā Pasha, his successor, in al-Ṣalīf. This was a difficult moment for Ottoman authority in Yemen as it was unclear who was now at the head of the administration. The outgoing pasha claimed it for himself, but there were officers among those staying behind who believed that he had no authority to make such decisions. At the heart of the

[178] TSMA.d.2893; *Bulūgh al-marām,* BNF Ar. 1651, f. 83b; MAD.d.4118, f. 35.
[179] Fayrūz, *Maṭāli' al-nīrān,* BNF Ar. 1651, f. 12a/14a; TSMA.d. 2893 (ʿAbd al-Wahhāb is listed as a member of the *müteferriqa* in Dinwah); Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb only got into trouble when he did not pay the taxes that he was supposed to collect in Ḥujayrīya. BNF Ar. 1651, f. 73b-74a.
[180] *Bulūgh al-marām* claims that it was the *defterdār* who incited the revolt of the army by telling them that due to the accession of the new sultan they were due a payment. *Bulūgh al-marām,* BNF Ar. 1651, ff. 90b-93a. ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh claims that the *defterdār* was the only person who was able to appease the rebellious soldiers while the pasha hid in the fort. Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 203. Ibn Dāʿir implies that the d*efterdār* was innocent, but Behrām Pasha made him the scapegoat. Ibn Dāʿir, *al-Futūḥāt al-murādīya,* vols. 3-4, Rāghib Pasha 979.

dispute was the question: to whom should the resources of the deceased pasha, in particular, his treasury, be transferred? This conundrum repeated at the close of the golden age of Ottoman rule in Yemen when Ibrāhīm Pasha died on his way to take office and Jaʿfer Pasha overruled the officers of the interim government.[181] In both cases, the outgoing pasha prevailed over his opposition, but, as a result, skilled officials were executed. In the case of Behrām Pasha, it was the *defterdār* who was the first person to suffer along with 80 other officers.[182]

By the end of Behrām's time in office, some of his Zaydi allies were getting tired of him. Ibn Dāʿir is our only source reporting on this, and he claims that both Ottoman officials and local elites were calling on the pasha to organize a consultative body, *shūrā,* to discuss ongoing issues.[183] If that is the case, then it is the first time that an Ottoman administration in Yemen was considering creating an institutionalized opportunity for local elites to provide advice and feedback to the administration.

The Yemenli Ḥasan Pasha group

The trends set by Behrām Pasha were furthered during the governorship of Kuyucu Murad Pasha and the almost twenty-year long tenure of Yemenli Ḥasan Pasha. These two governors stand at the peak of Ottoman-Yemeni cooperation. It is not a coincidence that these are the two most documented governorships in the history of Ottoman Yemen. From the period of Kuyucu Murad

[181] al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* vol. 3, NF C.101.ar, f. 187b.
[182] It is possible that he is the *defterdār* under whose authority the register TSMA.d.671 was compiled; if so, his name was Qāḍīzāde Muḥammad. On the number of executed officers, see Ibn Dāʿir, *al-Futūḥāt,* vol. 3, Rāghib Pasha 979.
[183] *Istadʿā ilayhi li-l-mushāwara aʿwānuhu wa anṣāruhu wa arkānuhu ka-l-malik Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn b. al-Muʾayyad wa Muḥammad b. Nāṣir b. Aḥmad [al-Ḥamzī] wa-l-amīr ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. al-Shawīʿ wa kāfat aʿyānihi … wa min jumlat man istadʿāhu li-shūrā al-malik Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn ṣāḥib ḥiṣn Kawkabān.* Ibn Dāʿir, *al-Futūḥāt al-murādīya,* vol. 3.

in Yemen over 70 defters of financial records, mostly pertaining to the army, are preserved in the Ottoman archives; from the time of Ḥasan Pasha the number of records is less – slightly over 10; however, since they provide information on tax farms in Yemen, they are more detailed than the *esāmī* (names) soldier register of Kuyucu Murad Pasha. It is also possible that some documents from this period are preserved in Egypt, as Ḥasan Pasha took them with him out of Yemen when he was appointed there.[184]

Both Kuyucu Murād and Ḥasan Pasha reached out beyond the elite groups that their predecessors engaged. In particular, they worked to bring scholars into the Ottoman orbit. In addition, they continued with the practices so vividly documented in the registers of Behrām Pasha – alliances with sayyids and tribal leaders abounded. Kuyucu Murād, in an effort to put the uprising of Muṭahhar behind him, pardoned Muṭahhar's allies in Taʿkar, among them a qāḍī who had incited locals against the Ottomans, and Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Baʿdānī who had a hand in the murder of Murād Pasha.[185] Of greater concern to Kuyucu Murād were the Ottomans who revolted against Behrām Pasha; for those people there was no forgiveness, so one of his first actions when he arrived in Ṣanʿāʾ was to execute Küçük ʿAlī, an amīr about whom Behrām had complained to the Porte, and Delī Najaq, the man who, it was considered, was the spokesperson of the revolting military.[186] Governors of the golden age did not stay absolutely stationary in one location; they also undertook travels across Yemen, in particular from Ṣanʿāʾ, which became their home base, to Dhamār and Taʿizz, where they would stay for at least a month to learn about local affairs. Ḥasan Pasha during his time in office went to many parts of Yemen, including Ṣaʿda which he captured from imam al-Nāṣir, the forts of Khawlān, Kawkabān, where he visited his allies, and tribal regions including

[184] Kānī Çelebi, *Bughyat al-khāṭir wa nuzhat al-nāẓir,* NF E.391.ar, f. 136b.
[185] Ibn Dāʿir, *al-Futūḥāt al-murādīya,* vol. 4, Raghib Pasha 979.
[186] Ibn Dāʿir, *al-Futūḥāt al-murādīya,* vol. 4, Raghib Pasha 979; Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 205.

Bilād Hamdān on tours (*ṭiyāfa*).[187] These travels of the governors were opportunities for local people to renegotiate their taxes, complain about officials, but also settings to establish new connections with the Ottoman administration.

Despite all these efforts, the northern highlands remained a source of unrest. This was specifically the case in al-Ahnūm, where imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Dāwūd al-Muʾayyadī called for the imamate in 986/1578, when he learned that Murād Pasha had left Ṣanʿāʾ to investigate the affairs of Dhamār and Taʿizz.[188] In this same area, twenty years later, imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim laid the foundation of his dynasty. Nevertheless, despite the appeal of the Zaydi *daʿwa*, the Ottoman administration withstood these challenges, not the least because the sayyids of the "buffer region" north of Ṣanʿāʾ, especially, the Āl Shams al-Dīn, did not join these imams, thus demonstrating the stability of the order put in place by Koca Sinān Pasha.[189]

While Kuyucu Murad Pasha failed in stopping imam al-Muʾayyad, Ḥasan Pasha pushed to capture Ṣaʿda early in his governorship. His campaign was prolonged since to get to Ṣaʿda he first had to deal with the remnants of the Āl al-Muṭahhar. His early success in the fight against the sons of Muṭahhar allowed him to pull the tribes that were usually their allies to his side. After a particularly successful attack on Luṭfallāh b. Muṭahhar, the shaykhs of Bilād al-Khashab, Jabal Banī ʿAlī, Bilād ʿIyāl ʿAbdallāh, Bilād Dhaybān arrived in Ṣanʿāʾ to display their support for the Ottomans and received from the governor gifts and salaries (*jawāmik,* sing. *jāmikīya*).[190] This allowed

[187] Al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan fī fī akhbār siyar al-bāshā Ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 477, ff. 161, 217-23. As is discussed in chapter 1, *ṭiyāfa* in the pre-Ottoman period denoted a tax collecting campaign.
[188] Ibn Dāʿir, *al-Futūḥāt al-murādīya,* vol. 4, Raghib Pasha 979; al-Lawzī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Nāṣir Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Dāwūd,* NF B.35.ar, f. 112a-112b, 114a; Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 226.
[189] Ibn Luṭfallāh, 210–11.
[190] Al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 477, f. 89

Ḥasan Pasha to direct amīr Sinān, the future governor of Yemen, to the task of capturing the northern Zaydi stronghold.[191]

Having dealt with the imam, Ḥasan Pasha found it useful to capture the sons of Muṭahhar and send them to Istanbul as high-ranking hostages.[192] The decision to eliminate half of the Āl Sharaf al-Dīn was a double-edged sword for the Ottoman administration. On the one hand, with this move the governor dealt a final blow to the ambitious sons of Muṭahhar who unlike their cousins were never fully on board with the alliance. On the other hand, unpredictable as they were, they were potential allies for the Ottomans, and as such could bring to order many tribes in the regions between Ṣaʿda and Ṣanʿāʾ. By taking them out of the political arena, the pasha created space for a candidate to the imamate, and one indeed appeared in 1008/1599 in the very same region that Ḥasan Pasha had to bring under control at the start of his campaign. But even imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim, though never himself captured, was not a threat during the governorship of Sinān Pasha (see chapter 3), and it was only the disintegration in the Ottoman ranks that gave the Qasimids the chance they needed.

Overall, both Ḥasan Pasha and his successor Sinān Pasha were, unlike Behrām and many earlier Ottoman governors of Yemen, fully engaged in the affairs of Upper Yemen. Their attention to the dealings between local tribes, the sayyid families, and attempts to extend an invitation to cooperate to local scholars made their times in office more competent. Both relied on local elites for advice and included them in the meetings of the governor's administration.[193] Sinān Pasha, who had spent a major part of his career in Yemen,[194] had met personally most people who

[191] Al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 477, ff. 146-47; Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 218.
[192] Ibn al-Muʾayyad, *al-Tuḥfa al-ʿanbarīya,* NF D.451.ar f. 145a; Ibn Luṭfallāh, 224–26.
[193] Ḥasan Pasha, for example, invited Luṭfallāh b. Muṭahhar to preside in his *majlis* in order to hear out the petitions of the tribal leaders and advise the governor on them. Ibn Luṭfallāh, 220.
[194] He arrived in Yemen in 989/1581 as a *kethüda* of Ḥasan Pasha. Ibn Luṭfallāh, 214.

mattered there, among them shaykhs of al-Ahnūm and al-Ḥayma, and members of the Āl al-Muṭahhar and the Āl Shams al-Dīn. It is for this reason that he and his successors made appearances at funerals of important Yemeni figures.[195] Al-Sharafī, a staunch opponent of the Ottomans, describes his approach to local elites as corrupting (*ifsād*), but in effect it seems that Sinān Pasha was continuing the tradition of gift exchange with potential allies that was already in place in the days of Koca Sinān Pasha. Alternatively, al-Sharafī might be confusing with bribes (perhaps, willfully) the regular salary payments which many of the shaykhs were receiving as part of their recompense for services to the Ottoman administration.[196]

After the death of Sinān Pasha in 1016/1607, the 'golden age' of Ottoman-Zaydi cooperation started to wane. The first few governors continued the practices of cooperation, not the least due to their personal connections to Ḥasan Pasha.[197] However, the tide was turning against the Ottomans, despite the efforts of Jaʿfer Pasha to negotiate peace treaties with imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim in 1017/1608 and 1025/1616. His biggest mistake, undoubtedly, was the release of the hostages that were imprisoned in Kawkabān, among them the eldest son of the imam, the future imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad (see chapter 3). Ottoman authority was undermined by the infighting between Ottoman administrators that started in 1022/1613 when the newly appointed governor

[195] Sinān Pasha attended the funeral of Muṭahhar b. al-Shawīʿ al-Ḥamzī in 1013/1604 (Ibn Luṭfallāh, 254.); Jaʿfer Pasha attended the funeral of the scholar Ṣalāḥ b. Aḥmad al-Wazīr in 1024/1615. *Dhayl Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr*, NF C.35.ar, f. 98b.

[196] He describes the action as distribution of money (*badala li-baʿḍihim mālan jalīlan*). Somehow similar actions by imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim and his supporters were not criticized. Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, ff. 155b-156b. 165a, 166b.

[197] Both Jaʿfer Pasha and Muḥammad Rāghib Pasha previously served under Ḥasan Pasha'[S] command. Jaʿfer Pasha held the position of *khazīnedār* and belonged to Ḥasan Pasha's household. After his patron's death he was transferred to the sultan's household and was appointed to Ethiopia (Ḥabeş) and later to Yemen. Sadettin Baştürk, "Telhîsü'l-Berku'l-Yemânî / Ahbârü'l-Yemânî (tahlil ve metin)" (Doktora Tezi, Erzurum, Atatürk Üniversitesi, 2010), 455; Rāshid Pasha, *Tārīkh-i Yemen ve Ṣanʿāʾ*, vol. 1, p.195.

Ibrāhīm Pasha died shortly after his arrival to Yemen. The outgoing governor Jaʿfer Pasha claimed authority but was challenged by amīr ʿAbdallāh Çelebi who was appointed by Ibrāhīm Pasha as *serdar* of the armies stationed in Ṣanʿāʾ and interim governor.[198] The next governor Muḥammad Rāghib Pasha (1026-1028/1617-1619) attempted to restore the region to the balance that existed under Ḥasan Pasha and Sinān Pasha. Like Jaʿfer Pasha, he drew on knowledge of Yemen transmitted to him by Ḥasan Pasha.[199] As an additional sign of his allegiance to Ḥasan Pasha's methods he took Muḥammad b. Sinān Pasha as his *kethüda.*[200] Muḥammad Rāghib Pasha was the last Ottoman governor who was warmly remembered in Zaydi sources;[201] however, his efforts were not sufficient to prevent the rise of the Qasimid imams. The end of the 'golden age' is vivid in the sharp decline of Ottoman documentation on the region; there are no more tax registers and even military registers disappear from the Ottoman archives. On the other hand, one could also look at this period of decline of the 'golden age' as a success – after all, imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim never lived to see the victory of his imamate, and after Muḥammad Rāghib Pasha left Yemen, it took another decade for the Ottomans to lose their hold on this region.

Soft power

During the 'golden age', the Ottomans changed the architectural landscape of Yemen by building new mosques, infrastructure (roads, wells etc.), and fortifications, as well as by

[198] Kānī Çelebi, *Bughyat al-khāṭir wa nuzhat al-nāẓir,* NF.E.391.ar, f. 135a.
[199] Muḥammad Rāghib held the position of *kātib al-dīwān* during Ḥasan Pasha's tenure as governor of Egypt. Kānī Çelebi, NF E.391.ar, f. 136b.
[200] Kānī Çelebi, NF E.391.ar, f. 137a.
[201] In particular, ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh, a member of the Āl al-Muṭahhar, who served as court historian to Ottoman governors of Yemen, made an effort to describe his patron Muḥammad Rāghib in positive terms.

reconstructing existing buildings.[202] Madrasas were among the many architectural projects of the Ottoman governors. The earliest record of a madrasa built by an Ottoman governor in Yemen dates to the time of Kuyucu Murad Pasha, in 985/1578. The madrasa in question was constructed in Ṣanʿāʾ.[203] Another madrasa is dated to 1005/1597, the period of governorship of Ḥasan Pasha, and is known in Zaydi sources as al-Madrasa al-Bākirīya.[204] Neither of these madrasas seems to have survived in its purely Ottoman conception and they are now known as mosques.[205] Ḥasan Pasha's madrasa cum mosque project was a most Ottoman style architectural ensemble, featuring several types of buildings and upholding the style of Sinan to such an extent that modern researchers suspect that plans for it were drawn up in Istanbul.[206] These construction projects fit well with the newest Ottoman initiative aimed at local scholars, whom they increasingly saw as potential allies. In addition, Ḥasan Pasha ordered the rebuilding of the mosque of Farwa b. Masīk al-Ṣaḥābī and its expansion to include a new minaret and a *samsara* (caravanserai) the income from which was to be redirected to the mosque (*maḥṣūl ghilālihā yakūn fī ṣalāḥ al-masjid*).[207] The last governor of the Yemenli Ḥasan Pasha group, Muḥamamd Rāghib Pasha, ordered the reconstruction of the mosque of Ṭalḥa in Ṣanʿāʾ.[208]

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[202] Frédérique Soudan, *Le Yémen ottoman d'après la chronique d'al-Mawzaʿī al-Iḥsān fī dukhūl mamlakat al-Yaman taḥt ẓill ʿadālat Āl ʿUṯmān*, Textes arabes et études islamiques 37 (Cairo: IFAO, 1999), 353–85; Caesar E. Farah, *The Ottoman Forts and Castles of Yemen: A Photographic and Architectural Analysis* (Lewiston / Queenston / Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2010).
[203] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 206.
[204] Ibn Luṭfallāh, 231.
[205] Ronald Lewcock, R. B. Serjeant, and G. Rex Smith, "The Smaller Mosques of Ṣanʿāʾ," in *Ṣanʿāʾ: An Arabian Islamic City* (London: Melisende, 2013), 375. The madrasa of Murād can probably be associated with the *Qubba murādīya.*
[206] Lewcock, Serjeant, and Smith, 376, 377–82.
[207] Al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 477, f. 154.
[208] Sālim, *al-Fatḥ al-ʿuthmānī al-awwal li-l-Yaman. 1538-1635*, 372.

Infrastructure work, in particular the construction of roads and waterways, as well as the rebuilding of forts was another important element in Ottoman policy. Kuyucu Murad Pasha was remembered for constructing new waterways to bring water from Jabal Nuqum to Ṣanʿāʾ.[209] One of Ḥasan Pasha's first actions in office was the rebuilding of fort ʿAmrān al-Bawn, razed during Muṭahhar's revolt.[210] His right-hand man, Sinān Pasha, concluded a successful campaign in Jabal Jaraʿ in 993/1585 by ordering the construction of a road to facilitate travel.[211] Muḥammad Rāghib Pasha invested in the reconstruction of the walls of Ṣanʿāʾ, while his appointee to Taʿizz, Muḥammad b. Sinān Pasha, focused on the construction of an aqueduct bringing the waters of Jabal Ṣabir to the town.[212] The scale of Ottoman construction work is hard to assess, as the historians only remark on the most notable projects. Nevertheless, even the partial evidence points to a consistent attention to the infrastructure of Yemen and to the maintenance of roads connecting the Lower and the Upper regions as well as the roads connecting the highlands to the Tihāma.

Another piece of evidence pointing to a greater integration of Yemenis into the Ottoman system is the proliferation of historians and litterateurs working under the patronage of Ottoman governors, but originating from Yemeni, including Zaydi backgrounds. Muṣṭafā Sālim suggests grouping them into a pro-Ottoman and a pro-Zaydi group;[213] however, if one considers the

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[209] Kānī Çelebi, *Bughyat al-khāṭir wa nuzhat al-nāẓir,* NF E.391.ar, f. 131a.
[210] Al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 477, f. 47. The pasha saw this as an important project that would encourage the return of the displaced, so the works were rushed and completed in 40 days.
[211] Al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 477, f. 265.
[212] Ibn al-Qāsim, *Ghāyat al-amānī fī akhbār al-quṭr al-yamānī*, 818. On the governorship of Muḥammad b. Sinān Pasha in Taʿizz under Jaʿfer Pasha and up to the arrival of Aḥmad Faḍlī Pasha, al-Mawzaʿī is the key source. See, in particular, Soudan, *Le Yémen ottoman d'après la chronique d'al-Mawzaʿī al-Iḥsān fī dukhūl mamlakat al-Yaman taḥt ẓill ʿadālat Āl ʿUṯmān*, 155–58, 163–68.
[213] Sayyid Muṣṭafā Sālim, *al-Muʾarrikhūn al-yamanīyūn fī-l-ʿahd al-ʿuthmānī al-awwal, 1532-1635* (Cairo: IFAO, 1974).

historians he lists as pro-Zaydi, at least some of them, like ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh, were aquitepro-Ottoman; vice versa, some of his pro-Ottoman historians were quite critical of some of the governors. The works of these local historians working for their Ottoman patrons attest to the development of a hybrid Ottoman-Yemeni high culture in this period. Moreover, even anti-Ottoman historians like al-Lawzī, al-Sharafī, and al-Jurmūzī, all of them staunch supporters of the Zaydi imams and their opposition to the Ottomans, find it necessary to discuss the Ottomans in their works. This is a major change from the Zaydi histories that coincided, for example, with the Rasulid period, where the Southern Yemeni dynasts make only cameo appearances.

The backgrounds of the pro-Ottoman historians, if we are to follow the distinctions made by Sālim, are quite varied. We find among them Zaydi sayyids, like ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh, Zaydi allies of tribal background, like al-Duʿāmī and Ibn Dāʿir, and Southern Yemeni authors like al-Mawzaʿī and al-Muṭayyab al-Zabīdī.[214] The historians of the hybrid Ottoman-Yemeni culture had a strong preference for the biographical genre, that on the one hand continued the traditions of the Zaydi *sīra* and on the other hand fit well with the need to appeal to the patron who commissioned the work. The earliest such biography was written about Riḍwān Pasha; however, only a fragment of it survives.[215] One exception to this rule is ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh who opted for a chronicle.

The Ottoman 'golden age' was also a fortunate time for Yemeni poets. Ḥasan Pasha in particular is remembered for rewarding poets, especially for their praise poetry (*madḥ*), even though he did not seem to have mastered Arabic to the level of understanding them.[216] The

[214] Ibn Dāʿir is quite possibly the son of Ṣalāḥ b. Dāwūd b. Dāʿir al-Marhabī who was a court poet of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn. Wajīh, 502.
[215] Anon., *Kitāb al-tījān al-wāfira al-thaman fī tārīkh wilāyat mawlānā ṣāḥib al-saʿāda Riḍwān li-quṭr al-Yaman wa dhikr man waliyahu baʿdahu bi-l-waṣf al-ḥasan.* BNF Ar. 1651, ff. 32a-45b.
[216] Ḥasan Pasha employed a translator (*tarjumān*), Ḥusayn, who had been in the service of Yemeni governors since the time of Behrām Pasha. Al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 447, ff. 19-20, 165.

information provided by al-Duʿāmī allows us to reconstruct to some extent the court of the governor; it included not only the more "elevated" literary poets but also the *shuʿarāʾ al-ʿawāmm* from Khawlān and Radāʿ who would compose poetry in his honor. If there was a particularly beautiful poem with rhetorical artifice (*ḥusn al-balāgha wa badāʾiʿ al-istiʿāra wa-l-faṣāḥa*), the governor would ask for it to be read several times and would preserve its written version (*nuskha*).[217]

The expansion of Ottoman soft power presented so far points to the success of the Ottoman administration in economic management, as well as the ability of Ottoman officials to expand their local networks.

The end of the Ottoman century (1622-1635)

The concluding years of Muḥammad Rāghib Pasha's governorship passed in a struggle to contain the rising Qasimid imamate. As the Ottomans began to lose allies and credibility in this conflict, their positions in Yemen became increasingly precarious. These developments in Yemen overlapped with the transformation of the Ottoman Empire. In this empire-wide process, there was no more a hierarchical pyramid, but a decentralized web of decision-making, and the Ottoman provinces were increasingly left to chart their own course.[218] While the Ottoman capital was focused on the regicide of Osman II in 1622, the decision-making authority for Ottoman policy in Yemen was taken over by Egypt. By now the fear of a European invasion of the Red Sea was no longer a factor, so there was no need to think geopolitically; instead, the high-ranking officials

[217] Al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 477, ff. 71-73.
[218] This process would culminate in the late seventeenth century in the rise of local power elites across the empire, the so-called age of *ayan* (Arabic *aʿyān*), local notables. Bruce A. Masters, *The Arabs of the Ottoman Empire, 1516-1918. A Social and Cultural History* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 37–42.

were pursuing their commercial interests,[219] and therefore the Egyptian governors threw their weight behind attempts to secure the Tihāma ports. Additionally, their resources were limited. The time of grand expeditions on the scale of Koca Sinān was gone as the Ottoman Empire lost the coordination necessary to move around large forces. Despite the efforts of the Egyptian governors, they discovered, like their predecessors, that they could not control Lower Yemen without control of the highlands.

Name	**Dates in office**	**Notes**
Aḥmad Faḍlī / Faḍlallāh Pasha	(1031-34 /1621-1624)	
Ḥaydar Pasha	(1034-37/1624-1629)	
Aḥmad Pasha	(died on his way to Yemen)	Former governor of Habesh
Aydın Pasha	(1037-39/1629-31)	Former governor of Habesh
(Aḥmad) Qāniṣawh Pasha	(1039-1045/1631-35)	Former *amīr al-ḥajj* of Egypt

Table 4. The last Ottoman governors of Yemen.

The drift of the center of decision-making on Yemen towards Egypt can in fact be traced back to the last years of the 'golden age'. When Ibrāhīm Pasha died shortly after his arrival in Yemen, the information about it reached the Ottoman court through the governor of Egypt.[220] This trend continued as the Yemenli Ḥasan Pasha group was removed from power. Their successors came from a new generation of administrators, who had no previous knowledge of the Yemeni situation and whose tenure was too short to develop a deep understanding of it. The last three governors of Yemen were in effect put in place by the Egyptian (rather than central, Istanbul-

[219] Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilisation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 184–90.
[220] MD 81, #341.

based) administration, and had mostly trade interests in the port cities at heart.[221] This change had a negative effect on the Ottoman management of Yemeni affairs.

The situation was further exacerbated by executions of Ottoman officials who disagreed with the policies of the new governors. Aḥmad Faḍlī Pasha executed the *defterdār* of Yemen in anticipation of Ḥaydar Pasha's appointment.[222] Ḥaydar Pasha wiped out a large number of Ottoman administrators who worked for his predecessor Aḥmad Faḍlī Pasha, including Muḥammad b. Sinān Pasha, the son of Yemenli Ḥasan Pasha's protégé, due to his fear of their ambitions.[223] An instructive example is the fate of Muḥammad b. Muṣṭāfā Kānī Çelebi, an Ottoman official originally from the Hijaz who had held the position of *defterdār* since 1019/1611 and was executed on the orders of Ḥaydar Pasha in 1037/1628 for disapproving of his inactive approach to the uprising led by imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad.[224] Similarly, Muḥammad b. Sinān Pasha, who spent most of his life in Yemen and attempted to oust the newly appointed Ḥaydar Pasha, was executed in 1033/1624.[225] This approach resulted in the loss of experienced personnel knowledgeable about the intricacies of Yemeni politics and weakened the lines of contact with local elites that the Ottomans had been building for several decades. It is no coincidence that the Āl Shams al-Dīn of

[221] Başţürk, "Telhîsü'l-Berku'l-Yemânî / Ahbârü'l-Yemânî (tahlil ve metin)," 420, 472–73.
[222] *Rawḥ al-rūḥ,* vol. 3, NF D.553.ar, f. 182a. While some Yemeni sources celebrated this pasha's piety and support for scholars, others noted the greediness of his officials. For a positive assessment see Ibn al-Qāsim, *Ghāyat al-amānī fī akhbār al-quṭr al-yamānī*, 818. For a criticism, see al-Ḍamadī, *al-ʿAqīq al-yamānī,* ff. 442-43.
[223] Başţürk, "Telhîsü'l-Berku'l-Yemânî / Ahbârü'l-Yemânî (tahlil ve metin)," 465–66; Ibn al-Qāsim, *Ghāyat al-amānī fī akhbār al-quṭr al-yamānī*, 818. Kānī Çelebi, *Bughyat al-khāṭir wa nuzhat al-nāẓir,* NF E.391.ar, f 143b. The decision to execute Muḥammad b. Sinān possibly alienated the pasha from the soldiers. Al-Ḍamadī, *Al-ʿAqīq al-yamānī,* f. 445.
[224] Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *Aʿlām qāmūs tarājim li-ashhar al-rijāl wa-l-nisāʾ min al-ʿarab wa-l-mustaʿribīn wa-l-mustashriqīn* (Beirut: Dār al-ʿilm li-l-malāyīn, 2002), vol. 7, pp. 99–100. Ibn al-Muʾayyad, *al-Tuḥfa al-ʿanbarīya,* NF D.451.ar, f. 14a.
[225] Kānī Çelebi, *Bughyat al-khāṭir wa nuzhat al-nāẓir,* NF E.391.ar, f. 143a; al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 249b.

Kawkabān switched to support the Qasimid imams around this time. There were no more trustworthy Ottoman officials for them to interact with.

The new governors failed to renegotiate alliances with their support base, whether Ottoman officials in Yemen or local elites, and continued to lose territory to the Zaydi imam who successfully united the tribes of the highlands and drew sayyid families to his side. Moreover, their control over territory and authority was also waning to such an extent that officials of imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad felt comfortable travelling through areas nominally under the control of the Ottoman governor to collect taxes in the name of the imam.[226] As the Qasimids increasingly looked like the most plausible victors in the conflict, the Ottoman governors lost their Āl Shams al-Dīn supporters in 1036/1627. In 1038/1629, Ḥaydar Pasha surrendered Ṣanʿāʾ to the Qasimids after an almost two-year-long siege. As he left the city, imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad sent his son Yaḥyā to guide the Pasha and guarantee that his caravan would not be attacked by the tribes.[227] On the road from Ṣanʿāʾ to Zabīd that his predecessors had for long worked to secure for travelers, the Ottoman governor no longer had any authority to rely on.

As a last attempt to regain ground in Yemen and in response to requests for help coming from local officials, Egyptian governors prepared two expeditions. The first one was struck down in a catastrophic storm in 1037/1628.[228] The follow-up expedition, organized on the order of the governor of Egypt Bayrām Pasha the same year, was entrusted to a former governor of Abyssinia and participant in the Abaza revolt, Aydın Pasha. When he reached Mocha, he settled there,

[226] *Rawḥ al-rūḥ,* vol. 3, NF D.553.ar, f. 183a.
[227] Ibn al-Qāsim, *Ghāyat al-amānī fī akhbār al-quṭr al-yamānī*, 830.
[228] Ibn al-Qāsim, 828. Al-Ḍamadī, KSUL 7708, *Al-ʿAqīq al-yamānī,* f. 543. Another factor in the failure of this expedition was the refusal of the authorities in the Hijāz (the ships sank near Jiddah) to provide any help, an additional indication of how poorly planned this expedition was in comparison to Koca Sinān's half a century earlier.

refusing to provide support to Ḥaydar Pasha who was besieged in Ṣanʿāʾ.[229] The next expedition was led by Qānişawh Pasha and arrived in Yemen in 1039/1630 but found little besides Mocha to save.[230] The Ottoman army was in disarray, soldiers refused to follow orders. In 1041/1631, a large contingent based in the Tihāma (Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Qāsim estimated them at a 1000 men) packed and left for Mecca, presumably heading to Syria (Shām). Local Yemeni commanders had no authority over them, and it was the governor of Egypt who had to send a force to the Hijāz to stop the rogue soldiers.[231] A group of Ottoman soldiers seems to have been simply forgotten in Zabīd and stayed there until 1044/1634, when they marched out of town to their deaths.[232] In 1045/1635, the last Ottoman officer, amīr Muṣṭafā asked permission from the Qasimid family to evacuate from Zabīd to Mocha, from which he embarked on a ship and left Yemen.[233] The Ottoman century in Yemen thus came to a close, proving that while an empire could have the resources to maintain order in a distant province, it was too great a task for a province, even one as rich and ambitious as Egypt.

Conclusion

Yemen came into the Ottoman orbit during the expansion of the empire in the early sixteenth century. Once the Ottoman state gained power and wealth, maintaining Yemen in the Ottoman imperial system became feasible. After an initial attempt mostly focused on the maritime

[229] Ibn al-Qāsim, 828. Yemeni sources write his name as ʿĀbidīn Pasha. Aydın Paşa served under the command of Abaza Mehmed Pasha in the battle at Kayseri in 1624. Prior to his arrival in Yemen, he held the governorship of Abyssinia. Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmanî*, vol. 1, p. 342; Baştürk, "Telhîsü'l-Berku'l-Yemânî / Ahbârü'l-Yemânî (tahlil ve metin)," 470.
[230] MAD.d.16008, dated 1039/1630, is a register providing information on the preparations for this expedition.
[231] Ibn al-Qāsim, *Ghāyat al-amānī fī akhbār al-quṭr al-yamānī*, 835.
[232] Ibn al-Qāsim, 838.
[233] Ibn al-Qāsim, 839.

regions, the Ottoman state transplanted its practices to Yemeni soil and proceeded with building an imperial province. As long as the Ottomans remained focused on Lower Yemen, however, they ran the risk of being overrun (or at least of remaining constantly harassed) by the highland imamate. Moreover, as they learned, Yemen required focused attention from dedicated officials; outsourcing decisions on Yemen to Egyptian officials did not play out well. The Koca Sinān Pasha campaign laid the groundwork for a new approach to governing Yemen, which culminated in the era of the Yemenli Ḥasan Pasha group. The Ottoman administration of Yemen flourished and achieved its peak development once it secured alliances with the sayyids, scholars and tribal shaykhs of the highlands. But a sequence of local decisions combined with transformations at the heart of the empire led to the relocation of the decision-making center to Egypt and made the Ottoman project in Yemen vulnerable to attack by the Qasimid imams. The period of Ottoman rule in Yemen thus showcases how developments in a distant province are closely linked to the transformations in the imperial metropole.

While the Ottoman officers and military units left Yemen, the legacy of the Ottoman century did not. The Qasimid imamate, as is discussed in the following chapter, came into existence, and sustained itself on the heritage of Ottoman policies. The new imamate was built as an antithesis to Ottoman rule; however, it also learned from it. First, there was the idea and practice of a united Yemen, especially in the east-west direction connecting the highlands and the Tihāma. The Ottomans, who reached out to many areas of southern Arabia, united its population through roads, trade, tax collection and the common presence of soldiers and officials. The Qasimids used this to rally support against the Ottomans and then to establish their own presence in the same regions. The advances of the Ottoman period in the sphere of Yemen's unification allowed the Qasimids to maintain the unity of Yemen in contrast to the Sharaf al-Dīns (see chapter 1).

Second, there were the new channels of communication between local elites and the state. Tribal shaykhs had spent a century on the Ottoman payroll and had come to see themselves as important state officials. Scholars had become used to receiving payments from the Ottomans and to being welcome at court, regardless of their *madhhab* affiliation (see also chapter 5). These newly empowered elites, as is shown in the next chapter, were the main participants and guarantors of the Qasimid project. At the same time, the Ottomans moderated the power of the sayyids (see chapter 4). By reshaping the social landscape of Yemen, the Ottomans thus prepared the ground for the rise of a dynastic imamate.

Third, there was the geopolitical shift. This included, first, the stabilized connection to Egypt and Ethiopia. Combined with the rise of the coffee trade and the intensified communications between the highlands (coffee producing regions) and littoral (coffee trading regions) of Yemen, it allowed the Qasimid imams to straddle the Red Sea coffee trade, a creation of Ottoman power. Secondly, this included the Ottoman ḥajj routes. Even though the Qasimids did not maintain a regular pilgrimage caravan on the same organized scale, there was no decline in the number of pilgrims from Yemen either. This made the Qasimid imamate a center of power in Arabia. Both developments were of importance for the future of the Qasimid polity and are discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 3. The early Qasimid imamate (1006-1054 / 1597-1644)

The rise of the Qasimid imamate in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and its success in overthrowing the Ottoman regime in Yemen provide an example of how local political traditions can be reinvigorated through interactions with outside state models, learn creatively from them and then turn the resulting experience against the conquerors. In particular, the Qasimids benefited from the social shifts stimulated by the Ottoman fiscal-military state, notably among three groups: the sayyids, who now formed a more coherent class with quasi-aristocratic traits, the scholars, who developed a professional identity linked to administrative tasks as well as traditional religious responsibilities, and among the tribes, who were by then fully initiated into the gunpowder military technology. The Qasimids were able to find allies among ambitious representatives of all three groups who felt alienated from the Ottoman regime and offered them those privileges that they were unable to secure in the Yemen under the rule of the Ottomans. Ottoman efforts to integrate Yemen into trade networks that were taken over by the Qasimids further provided an unprecedented economic foundation for the flourishing of the dynasty in the century after the expulsion of the Ottomans.

The rise of the Qasimids as an imamate and a dynasty is associated with imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim b. Muḥammad (d. 1029/1620). He issued his call for the imamate in 1006/1597, but despite initial support from the tribes, the outlook of his uprising was bleak while Ḥasan Paşa was still in Yemen. Tangible results started to appear after 1013/1604, when this long-ruling Paşa finally left the region. Subsequent appointees to the post of governor proved less apt at containing the Zaydi imam. Personal ambitions and a chaotic succession of appointments got in their way, and each of them concluded his governorship by signing agreements with the imam, thus reinforcing the status

of the imamate in the eyes of the Yemenis.[1] Imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim, however, failed to expelthe Ottomans from Yemen. This honor belongs to the second imam of the dynasty, his son imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad b. Qāsim (d. 1054/1644). Under his rule the Qasimid imamate spilled out from the northern highlands into the southern coastal regions. The transition of power to imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad after the death of his father was probably one of the critical bifurcation points for the Qasimid imamate. The dynastic transfer of power succeeded to a great extent due to the support of the elites that joined imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim. However, imam al-Muʾayyad had to find a balance between these new elites and his brothers. This chapter will discuss how he approached the issue of internal family ambitions and state-building.

The rise of the Qasimids has been extensively treated in historiography. While not claiming to provide a definitive explanation of the success of this dynasty in state-building, this chapter advances several arguments that have not yet been considered in the existing literature. I argue that the reason for the Qasimid success is more closely tied to their ability to learn from Ottoman practices in Yemen than to the commonly postulated weakening of Ottoman power.[2] Moreover, without Ottoman restructuring of the Zaydi political arena the Qasimids would not have had a chance to find their niche in it. I also argue that it took the Qasimids several decades to build up a coalition of supporters – as I showed in the previous chapter, the Ottoman regime in Yemen was better integrated with local elites than previous scholarship acknowledges. The ways in which the leaders of the Qasimid political project engaged local elites and pulled them to their side are at the center of my inquiry. Finally, this chapter focuses on the internal balance between members of the

[1] The two treaties were with Sinān Paşa in 1016/1607 and Meḥmed Paşa in 1028/1619. R. B. Serjeant, "The Post-Medieval and Modern History of Ṣanʿāʾ and the Yemen, ca.953-1382/1515-1962," in *Ṣanʿāʾ: An Arabian Islamic City*, ed. R. B. Serjeant and Ronald Lewcock (London: Melisende, 2013).

[2] See chapter 2 of this dissertation for a discussion of the evolution of Ottoman rule in Yemen.

Qasimid family, especially the brothers of imam al-Muʾayyad, and postulates that the ability of the imam to negotiate with his brothers was a crucial element for the survival of the Qasimid state. However, the system that imam al-Muʾayyad built was fragile and could not sustain the imamate beyond his own generation.

The rise of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim

The rise of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim stands out against the patterns of the previous two centuries, during which all imams who rose to power came from (or were allied with) two sayyid clans – the Banū al-Wazīr (including the Sharaf al-Dīn family) and the Āl al-Muʾayyad. One notable exception was imam al-Manṣūr al-Sirājī, discussed in chapter 1, not a member of any strong sayyid family, who was thrust forward by Ṣanʿāʾ elites as an alternative candidate to the Āl al-Muʾayyad imams. Imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim, however, came to power as an outsider, an anti-candidate, who rose against the Zaydi elites who allied themselves with the Ottoman administration of Yemen as well as the Ottomans themselves. To succeed, he had to rely on a different support base than his predecessors – lower-level scholars and tribal elites, who had been excluded from the new political order. In addition, the political success of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim's project would not have been possible, on the one hand, without the timely ebb and flow of conflict within the Zaydi elites who tried to use him in their own interests, as a bargaining chip against the Ottomans, and, on the other hand, without shifts in the Ottoman administration of Yemen, discussed in the previous chapter. The building of a viable imamate was a painstaking process that came in phases. This was already acknowledged by the imam's contemporaries, and the historian al-Jurmūzī suggested a chronology for the rule of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim that included four waves of uprisings (*arbaʿ*

nahaḍāt).[3] Its successes were marked by treaties concluded by the imam with the Ottomans that enforced the Qasimid imamate's legitimacy and authority.

Before the *daʿwa*

Over the previous half century, the Ottomans had reconfigured the political landscape in Yemen. Powerful Zaydi families like the Āl Shams al-Dīns of Kawkabān became Ottoman allies; even families that did not achieve the same level of association as the Āl Shams al-Dīn, like, for example, their relatives from the Āl al-Muṭahhar, still entered the Ottoman orbit. And just a decade before the *daʿwa* of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim, in 993/1585, Ottoman forces side by side with their Zaydi allies had defeated the uprising of imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Dāwud al-Muʾayyadī, captured the imam and exiled him to Istanbul. This success was a result of a consistent policy of deterring alliances with the imam; in effect, imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan was captured in ʿAffār where he relocated on the invitation of Ghawth al-Dīn b. Muṭahhar b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn only to find himself betrayed by another Zaydi sayyid.[4]

The defeat dealt a serious blow to those Zaydis who were supporting the idea of the imamate, as it indicated a profound split in Zaydi society itself – more people in the highlands were interested in becoming partners of the Ottoman state than its opponents.[5] Ten years after the defeat of imam al-Nāṣir, when imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim considered resurrecting the imamate, the political scene had not shifted. The general sentiment was that the Ottomans and their allies, especially the

[3] Muṭahhar b. Muḥammad al-Jurmūzī, *Kitāb al-nubdha al-mushīra ilā jumal min ʿuyūn al-sīra fī akhbār mawlānā amīr al-muʾminīn wa sayyid al-muslimīn al-manṣūr bi-llāh rabb al-ʿālamīn al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī* (Ṣanʿāʾ: Maktabat al-Yaman al-kubrā, 1980), 266.
[4] Al-Lawzī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Nāṣir li-dīn allāh Ḥasan b. ʿAlī,* NF B.35.ar, f. 102a.
[5] This fact is best reflected in the pages that al-Lawzī, the biographer of imam al-Nāṣir, dedicates to describing the punishments that befell those who betrayed the imam. See Al-Lawzī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Nāṣir,* NF B.35.ar, ff. 102b-108b.

Āl Shams al-Dīn and Āl Muṭahhar, were firmly in control of Yemen. Ḥasan b. Nāṣir al-Ghurbānī, one of the commanders of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim, allegedly said that shortly after the capture of imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan he had no thoughts of the imamate as he saw the strength of the Ottomans. (*kān al-imāma mā taʿarraḍa fī fikrī li-mā arā min sharārat al-khalq wa quwwat sulṭān al-turk ʿalā-l-arḍ).*When asked to name the two most powerful people he knew, he listed the "kings of Yemen" (*mulūk al-Yaman*) such as ʿAbd al-Raḥīm b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muṭahhar and Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn of Kawkabān.[6] The regions that imam al-Nāṣir relied on during his attacks on the Ottomans, in particular, al-Ahnūm, were precisely the ones that betrayed him.

Imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim was aware of the obstacles that lay ahead of him in his political project. He grew up in al-Sharaf, a region under Sharaf al-Dīn and Ottoman control. His father resided near Ḥajja in the territories of banū Madīkha, his maternal relatives (*akhwāl*).[7] His grandfather and paternal uncles had served the descendants of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn.[8] His paternal aunt's husband, sayyid Aḥmad b. Ḥasan al-Khaṭīb, served as preacher in Kawkabān.[9] The family was closely connected to the local tribes and fell into the category of 'middling' sayyids; there is even a report about the aunt of the imam, *sharīfa* Umm al-Ghayth bint ʿAlī going to a *sūq* for shopping, not an activity in which a *sayyida* from an upper-class family like the Āl al-Muʾayyad or the Banū al-Wazīr would engage.[10] A later historian of the Qasimid family, a descendant of the

[6] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 71.
[7] Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 91b; al-Jurmūzī, 76. On Mt. Madīkha named after the tribe see Ibrāhīm Aḥmad al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam al-buldān wa-l-qabāʾil al-yamanīya* (Ṣanʿāʾ / Beirut: Dār al-kalima li-l-ṭibāʿa wa-l-nashr wa-l-tawzīʿ / al-Muʾassasa al-jāmiʿīya li-l-dirāsāt wa-l-nashr wa-l-tawzīʿ, 2002), vol. 2, p. 1470. al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 76.
[8] ʿĀmir b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Rashīd, *Bughyat al-murīd wa uns al-farīd ilā maʿrifat intisāb dhurriyyat al-sayyid ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Ibn al-Rashīd*, ed. ʿAbbās b. Aḥmad al-Khaṭīb al-Mutawakkil (Ṣanʿāʾ: Muʾassasat al-imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-thaqāfīya, 2010), 58.
[9] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 6.
[10] al-Jurmūzī, 6.

imam's paternal uncle ʿĀmir b. ʿAlī, claimed that Umm al-Ghayth was married at different times to two descendants of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn – Luṭfallāh b. Muṭahhar b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn and Ibrāhīm b. ʿAlī b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, – conveniently forgetting her preacher husband mentioned by al-Jurmūzī.[11] This is not confirmed in any other sources and might indicate an attempt to elevate the status of the Qasimid family by their descendants.

Information about the mother of the imam is difficult to confirm. Al-Jurmūzī implies that she was a daughter of a shaykh, tribal leader, of the banū Madīkha. However, if that were indeed the case, he would not have been so reluctant to give her name and the name of her father. It is possible that by the time al-Jurmūzī started composing this biography, his patrons, the sons of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim, preferred the tribal connection to be swept under the carpet. Another possible explanation is that the biography of the imam was composed after his death, in the days of the third Qasimid imam al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl, putting a considerable distance between the biographer and his subject. Al-Jurmūzī himself refers to the difficulty of collecting relevant information.[12] Somehow, however, Ibn al-Rashīd, writing his short biography of the imam in a genealogical work even later than al-Jurmūzī, provided the name of the mother of the imam – Ḍāna bint al-shaykh ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Madīkhī.[13] He claimed, however, that her family were scholars (*fuqahāʾ*), not tribal leaders. This too can be seen as an attempt to elevate the social status of the family of the imam. This not unintentional confusion stands in contrast to the *sīra*s of imam Yaḥyā

[11] Ibn al-Rashīd, *Bughyat al-murīd wa uns al-farīd ilā maʿrifat intisāb dhurriyyat al-sayyid ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Ibn al-Rashīd*, 50.
[12] The imam's grandfather and paternal uncle Nāṣir were buried in Thulā, both had served Muṭahhar b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn. Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 91b.
[13] Ibn al-Rashīd, *Bughyat al-murīd wa uns al-farīd ilā maʿrifat intisāb dhurriyyat al-sayyid ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Ibn al-Rashīd*, 171.

Sharaf al-Dīn that proudly underline his descent from imams on both his maternal and paternal side.

The future imam al-Manṣūr spent many years in the Sharaf region, teaching, writing, and hiding from the Ottomans and their allies. Unlike imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn and imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan, in his early years he did not have the backing of the rich and powerful sayyid clans. It was al-Manṣūr Qāsim's scholarly achievement and principled stance as a Zaydi scholar against the Ottomans and their allies that established his position, according to his biographer.[14] Al-Jurmūzī reports, for instance, that the imam had to convince Zaydi scholars in a *hijra* to support the Ahl al-Bayt and the imamate during his travels in those years.[15] A scholarly profile required travel, and indeed, as far as we can reconstruct the imam's itinerary prior to the *daʿwa,* he travelled widely across Yemen, particularly the northern regions, and even participated in the *ḥajj.* The pilgrim caravan assembled in Ṣaʿda, providing the imam with an opportunity to meet the Āl al-Muʾayyadī scholarly circles and establish connections to scholars from other important centers. He seems to have been particularly successful with scholars from Dhamār.[16] Relatedly, a topos in al-Jurmūzī's reports about the imam's early years is that al-Manṣūr Qāsim was staying in safe-houses across Yemen, while in his encounters with possible enemies he was regularly saved by his modest scholar's attire that prevented them from identifying him as a sayyid.[17] His scholarly activities in this period explain the peculiar structure of his support network, discussed below.

At the heart of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim's political program was a criticism of the Sharaf al-Dīn family and other Zaydi sayyid families and their alliance with the Ottomans. When courting

[14] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 80.
[15] al-Jurmūzī, 71–73.
[16] al-Jurmūzī, 83–84.
[17] al-Jurmūzī, 71–74. On several occasions, he was taken to be Indian .al-Jurmūzī, 74, 84.

amīr Ḥasan b. Nāṣir al-Ghurbānī, an experienced military commander who had previously served imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan, the future imam insisted that the descendants of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn were the source of oppression in the country.[18] These sentiments were also expressed in a propagandistic poem by one of the supporters of the imam, sayyid Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ghurbānī, in which he criticized the Turks for an un-Islamic lifestyle and their Zaydi allies for choosing foreign rulers over their own people.[19] This was a vision that can only be explained by his experience in al-Sharaf and Ḥajja, regions where this family dominated the political scene. Local dissatisfaction with the Ottoman administration and the Sharaf al-Dīns as its enablers could also explain why, according to some reports, the shaykhs of Maḥābisha provided financial support to the imam.[20] The reason for the displeasure of the shaykhs of the region with the current regime could potentially be connected to the fact that they were not relatives of the Sharaf al-Dīns as some clans of Ḥajja were, and thus did not have privileges.

Pragmatic reasons for the *daʿwa* were supplemented by a mystical calling to fight the oppression of the Turks. In a report quoted by al-Jurmūzī, al-Manṣūr Qāsim recounted that he spent many nights being afraid of the oppressors until he felt a bird-like apparition calling out to him to become an imam and stand up to the tyrants.[21] In another personal statement transmitted on the authority of early supporters the imam claimed to have planned to stay in the Ḥijāz after the pilgrimage, or even to go to Northern Iran (Jīlān and Daylamān, regions with a history of Zaydi rule),

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[18] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 71.
[19] al-Jurmūzī, 86–88.
[20] al-Jurmūzī, 71. Interestingly, the rumor was that the money came from a woman of shaykhly origins. The Maḥābisha is a region (and in modern days an urban center as well) to the north of Ḥajja. al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 2, pp. 1413–14.
[21] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 77. *Innī [al-Manṣūr Qāsim] kuntu ayyām khawfī min al-ẓalama asīr fī-l-layl fa-ḥaṣala maʿī fī baʿḍ al-layālī wuḥsha fa-aḥsastu min fawqī shayʾan kahayʾat al-ṭayr aw naḥwahu lā arāhu wa huwa yasīr fī-l-hawā maʿī wa yunādīnī bi-smī yā imām Qāsim.*

but was stopped by either the Prophet or imam al-Hādī ilā-l-ḥaqq appearing to him and promising him that the people of Yemen would pledge allegiance to him (*yubāyiʿ lahu ahl al-Yaman)*.[22]

While the fight against oppressors is a common topos in Zaydi biographies of imams and a requirement of a true *daʿwa*, it is worth noting here that imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn reported no supernatural calling comparable to that of al-Manṣūr Qāsim. In clarifying the reasons for Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's *daʿwa* his biographers wrote of dreams and visions *others* had of him as an imam, never his own. The episode of a calling thus appears as an important topos for an outsider who starts a campaign. The supernatural component of the imam's *daʿwa* is additionally underlined in al-Jurmūzī's *sīra* through a series of stories about the future imam residing as an ascetic in al-Sharaf, unrecognized even by his relatives, while receiving miraculous support from God who sent him a milking gazelle for nourishment.[23] Finally, al-Jurmūzī pointed out that the Jews of Yemen supported imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim, providing him with financial means and recognizing the divinely just war that he was leading.[24] In doing this, he was attempting to underline the universal support that the imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim had in Yemen, while in fact making it more visible that his allies included outsiders to Yemeni society.

The network of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim

Who were the supporters of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim and how did the imam encounter them? It is impossible to understand his success without discussing his connection to the Āl al-

[22] al-Jurmūzī, 85.
[23] al-Jurmūzī, 78–79, 81. It is during this period in hiding that, according to al-Jurmūzī and al-Sharafī, the future imam composed his famous works.
[24] al-Jurmūzī, 81. *Laqad aḥabbahu wa nāṣarahu … al-yahūd.* This statement is followed by a story about a Jew in Wādiʿa, who travelled to the imam to donate money to him and who proclaimed that the imam's *jihād* was pleasing to those on earth and in heaven: *hādhā-l-jihād al-ladhī anta fīhi yarḍāhu ahl al-arḍ kamā yarḍāhu ahl al-samāʾ.*

Muʾayyad social network that he took over from the last imam of this prominent family, al-Nāṣir Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Dāwud al-Muʾayyadī, and from sayyid ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn al-Muʾayyadī, an alternative claimant to the imamate who resided in the Hijaz.

Prior to issuing his *daʿwa*, the future imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim seems to have been set on reinvigorating the Muʾayyadī political project.[25] To this end he reached out to former supporters of imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan, in particular members of the Ghurbānī sayyid family like amīr Ḥasan b. Nāṣir, an experienced military leader.[26] The connection to this family was sealed through al-Manṣūr Qāsim's marriage to the sister of amīr Ḥasan, Fāṭima bint Nāṣir b. ʿAbdallāh, around 989/1581.[27] This initial contact was followed by a *ḥajj* trip on the part of the future imam. Originally, the goal of the pilgrimage was to encourage sayyid ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī al-Muʾayyadī to lead the community. In a meeting attended by notable Zaydi scholars the future imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim challenged the sayyid and, according to ʿAlī Ibn Abī al-Rijāl, a witness, emerged from the confrontation as a strong candidate for the imamate.[28] This meeting and the performance of the future imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim made an impression on former Muʾayyadī allies, such as Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Yaʿqūbī (d. 1028/1619), the treasurer of imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan, who resided with sayyid ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī al-Muʾayyadī in the Ḥijāz.[29] Thus, the pilgrimage allowed him to recruit pro-Muʾayyadī scholars and former members of the Muʾayyadī administration. According to al-Jurmūzī, the future imam also tried to establish contact with faqīh Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā Ibn

[25] Al-Jurmūzī, our main source on the early years of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim, does not provide dates for these events. This makes the sequence of contacts of the imam hard to establish with certainty.
[26] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 71.
[27] Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 229b. Their eldest son, Muḥammad, the future imam al-Muʾayyad, was born in 990/1582.
[28] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 85–86.
[29] Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF.C.101.ar, f. 220a; al-Jurmūzī, 63, 85.

Salāma, a notable supporter of imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan, who was held prisoner in Ṣanʿāʾ on the guarantee of the Āl al-Ḥamza.[30] To this end, he travelled to Ṣanʿāʾ in disguise and was nearly caught by the Ottoman governor. His mission was successful, and the sons of this scholar appear in Jurmūzī's list of supporters of the imam.

A similarly dangerous adventure took place when the imam travelled to his uncle who, inconveniently, resided in Shibām Kawkabān.[31] This trip was part of an attempt to develop a network of military leaders who could support al-Manṣūr Qāsim's campaign, especially its military aspect, in Dhamār, bilād Ānis and al-Sharaf, areas that were close to territories under the control of the Āl Shams al-Dīn and the Ottomans. In addition to his uncle and amīr al-Ghurbānī, the imam identified a family who could act as his agents in the Dhamār region– the banū Ḥamāṭa represented by qāḍī Yūsuf b. ʿAlī al-Ḥamāṭī and his son ʿAlī. Characterizing qāḍī Yūsuf al-Ḥamāṭī, Jurmūzī wrote that he came from an affluent family that had claims to leadership in his tribe, while al-Shawkānī, in a much later reflection, characterized the activities of this qāḍī as equivalent to those of a *muḥtasib*.[32] Imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim considered this qāḍī central to the success of his *daʿwa*; according to some sources even before he issued his call, he sent a trusted sayyid to the scholar-shaykh to seek his support.[33]

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[30] al-Jurmūzī, 73. (*Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. Salāma … kān maḥbūsan fī qaṣr Ṣanʿāʾ wa ʿalayhi ḍamānāt ashrāf al-Jawf … liʾannahu mimman lazima maʿa ḥayy mawlānā al-imām [al-Nāṣir] al-Ḥasan*). Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. Salāma held an important position in the circles of imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan, acting as his advisor. See al-Lawzī, NF B. 35.ar, ff. 89a, 110a. This meeting seems to have taken place after the *ḥajj,* as Ibn Salāma is listed among the scholars who travelled from Ṣaʿda with the imam.

[31] al-Jurmūzī, 74.

[32] *Kān wāliduhu min ahl al-yasār wa min bayt riyāsatihim [banī Ḥamāṭa].* al-Jurmūzī, 57; Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Shawkānī, *Al-Badr al-ṭāliʿ bi-maḥāsin man baʿd al-qarn al-sābiʿ* (Cairo: Dār al-kitāb al-islāmī, n.d.), pt. "Mulḥaq," p. 231.

[33] Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa*, NF C.101.ar, f. 134b.

We cannot fully reconstruct imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim's network and its transformation. Nevertheless, there is an indispensable source that allows for an analysis of the final structure of the imam's support base. Al-Jurmūzī's *sīra* of the imam provides a list of people who constituted the innermost circle of the imam's supporters with brief biographies.[34] Al-Jurmūzī included 105 people in his list and organized them in two classes (sing. *ṭabaqa,* pl. *ṭabaqāt*), putting first all the sayyid scholars in two classes and then all the non-sayyid scholars.[35] He excluded those supporters of the imam who were purely military commanders and known by their title of amīr.

Two things should be noted about this arrangement. The focus on the scholarly class does not actually mean that all those listed are known for their works; some of these scholars never authored a scholarly work or transmitted their knowledge to students. More precisely this list could be characterized as an index of Yemeni literati. Secondly, al-Jurmūzī's placement of sayyid-scholars before non-sayyids is indicative of a hypothetical Yemeni social hierarchy rather than the actual contribution of sayyids to the rise of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim to power.[36] Few well-known sayyids supported imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim's call to the imamate before the 1028/1619 treaty with the Ottomans. Of the fifty sayyids listed in the *sīra,* almost a half (twenty-two) cannot be identified as belonging to well-established sayyid families. And of those families that can be identified, several – the Jaḥḥāfs, the Ghurbānīs, the Sharafīs – had not been prominent in the preceding periods. There

[34] A summary table of the data used for the analysis of the networks of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim and al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad is included in the appendix.
[35] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 44–70.
[36] Gerholm criticizes such linear approaches to social stratification in Yemen as "sayyid sociology" and suggested that the Yemeni social stratification cannot be compared to the Indian caste system. Tomas Gerholm, *Market, Mosque and Mafraj : Social Inequality in a Yemeni Town*, Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology ; 5 (Stockholm: Department of Social Anthropology, University of Stockholm, 1977), viii. While Gerholm's statement holds true for both the period he studied (1970s) and for earlier periods, as this dissertation demonstrates, it remains notable that pre-modern Yemeni authors, sayyids and non-sayyids alike, themselves insisted on this hierarchical structure.

is only one member of the Āl al-Ḥamza in this first class (*al-ṭabaqa al-ūlā*) of supporters of the imam, Ḥasan b. Sharaf al-Dīn b. Ṣalāḥ al-Ḥamzī,[37] even though al-Sharafī mentions other members of this family who in 1026/1617 took steps towards an alliance with imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim.[38] Instead, the al-Ghurbānī and Jaḥḥāf sayyid families, descendants of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim b. ʿAlī al-ʿIyānī (d. 393/1003) and residents of al-Ahnūm since the eleventh century,[39] formed the core of the imam's support network.

This absence of "big names" was a source of discomfort for the historian, so he added to the first class of supporters of the imam a group of leading sayyids who joined him much later. This peculiar group of people who "were late to support the imam due to excuses" (*alladhīn taʾakhkharū ʿan nuṣratihi li-aʿdhār*) include the elites of the pre-Ottoman and Ottoman periods, in particular members of the Āl al-Muʾayyad and Banū al-Wazīr clans, who finally joined the imam in 1028/1619.[40] One instructive example of al-Jurmūzī's attempts to embellish the relationship between the nascent Qasimid state and the sayyids is visible in his treatment of the Āl al-Muʾayyad. This important sayyid family is the most numerous in al-Jurmūzī's list, with eight members. However, out of these only three are listed as belonging to the first *ṭabaqa* (and none of them are known to other Yemeni historians).[41] On the other hand, the more famous members of the family – four Ṣanʿāʾ based scholars – are adduced in the special sub-group of 'those who were

[37] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 44.
[38] The cousins Nāṣir b. Ḥamza b. Aḥmad al-Ḥamzī and ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ḥamzī are the two members of the Āl al-Ḥamza who joined the imam in 1026-1027. Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, ff. 212b, 216a.
[39] Muḥammad ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Dabbī al-Shahārī, *Shahāra fī tārīkh al-Yaman al-ḥadīth wa-l-muʿāṣir (1006-1382 / 1597-1962)* (Ṣanʿāʾ: al-Jīl al-jadīd nāshirūn, 2014), 62–63. The Jaḥḥāf family settled in al-Ahnūm later, most probably due to the appointment to the position of wālī of Ahnūm in Muṭahhar b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's days. al-Shahārī, 71.
[40] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 52.
[41] They are Dāwūd b. al-Hādī al-Muʾayyadī, al-Ṭayyib b. Aḥmad al-Muʾayyadī and Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Muʾayyadī.

late.' One of them, Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Muʾayyadī, joined the Qasimids only in 1038/1629, a decade after the death of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim; al-Jurmūzī is in this case taking his interpretation of those who belong to the circle of supporters of the first Qasimid imam quite far.[42]

The selective approach of al-Jurmūzī speaks to two things: first, that without mentioning the old sayyid elites the recognition of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim was not complete. Second, that these elites were still important powerholders in the new Qasimid imamate and had to be acknowledged in a history of the imamate, even if they were latecomers, and had to be assigned a correct place in the hierarchy. The list reveals that in his early days the imam had to rely on scholars and their tribal connections above everything else to advance his cause. Scholars constitute more than half of the list in total (with sixty-five people mentioned) and the majority (fifty-five) belong to the first class, *ṭabaqa.*

Unlike sayyids, scholars do not form a similarly consolidated family system in imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim's time. While sayyids fall into eight family groups, scholars fall into seventeen families; in addition, some scholars still associated closely with their tribes of origin. No scholarly family rises to the same numerical value as the Āl al-Muʾayyad. At the same time, sayyids were put forward as *wālīs* of the imam. This indicates that regardless of the prominence of these sayyids, there was an expectation of sayyid rule – both in the conquered territories and among the sayyids surrounding the imam. In al-Sharafī's list of *wālī*s of the imam in 1006/1598 only one out of the eleven listed *wālī*s is not a sayyid.[43]

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[42] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 52. Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh indeed started out as a supporter of the imam in 1006/1598, however, within a year he switched to the Ottoman side that he felt provided more avenues for the realization of his ambitions. It took him until 1038/1629 to join the Qasimids again. al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, ff. 142a, 149a, 151b.
[43] Al-Sharafī, NF C.101.ar, f. 143a.

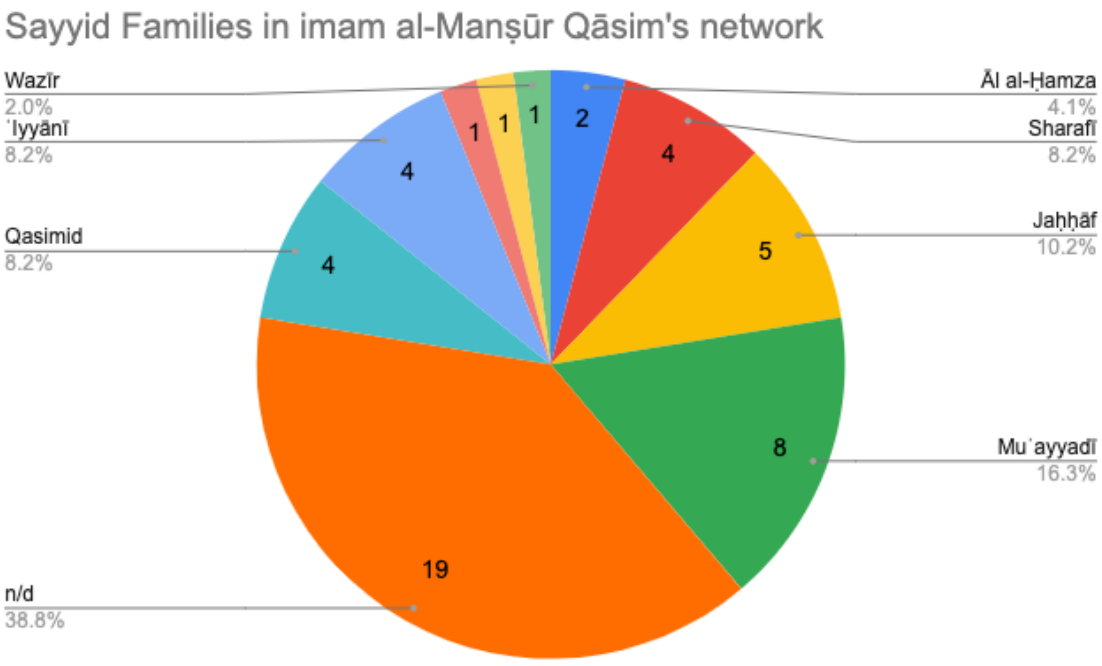

Chart 1. Sayyid families in imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim's network. Numbers on the chart slices indicate the numerical value; "n/d", i.e., "no data" stands for members who could not be assigned a family group. Source: al-Jurmūzī, Muṭahhar b. Muḥammad. *Kitāb al-nubdha al-mushīra ilā jumal min ʿuyūn al-sīra fī akhbār mawlānā amīr al-muʾminīn wa sayyid al-muslimīn al-manṣūr billāh rabb al-ʿālamīn al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī.* Ṣanʿāʾ: Maktabat al-Yaman al-kubrā, 1980, pp. 44-70.

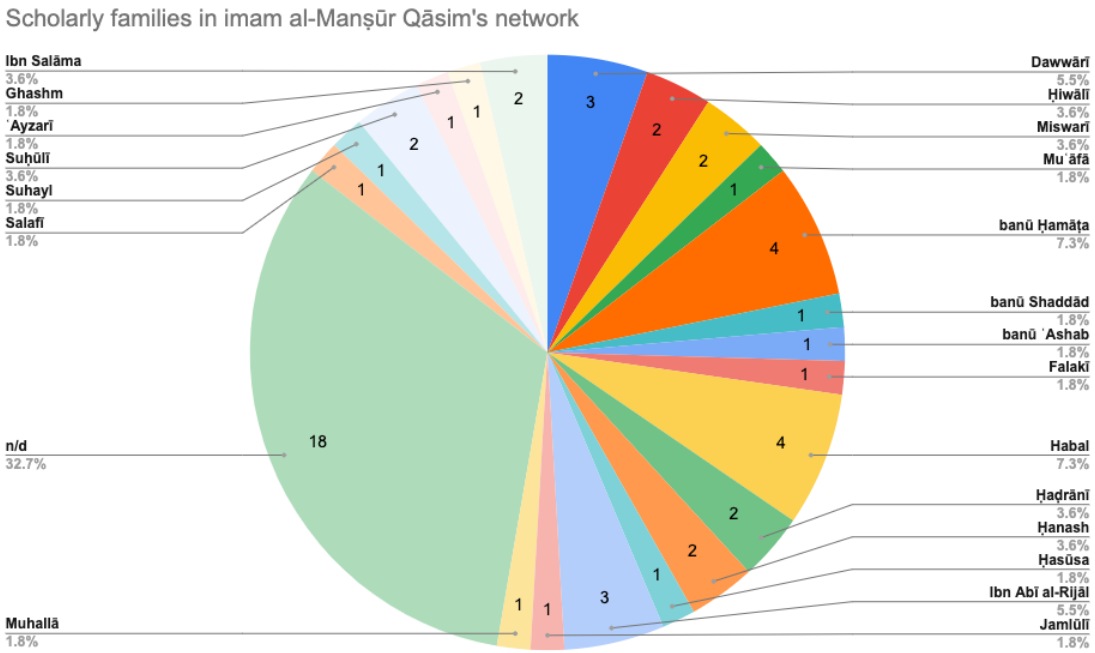

Chart 2. Scholarly families in imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim's network. Numbers on the chart slices indicate the numerical value; "n/d", i.e., "no data", stands for members who could not be assigned a family group. Source: al-Jurmūzī, Muṭahhar b. Muḥammad. *Kitāb al-nubdha al-mushīra ilā jumal min ʿuyūn al-sīra fī akhbār mawlānā amīr al-muʾminīn wa sayyid al-muslimīn al-manṣūr bi-llāh rabb al-ʿālamīn al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī.* Ṣanʿāʾ: Maktabat al-Yaman al-kubrā, 1980, pp. 44-70.

Among the early supporters of the imam who were not sayyids were members of the Ibn Abī al-Rijāl clan. This scholarly family had a long history in Yemen that preceded the Qasimid and Ottoman periods, however from the times of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn onwards they could not boast participation in political affairs. The Qasimid uprising gave them a new opportunity. Qāḍī al-Hādī b. ʿAbdallāh Ibn Abī al-Rijāl (d. 1025/1616) was one member of this illustrious family whose activities among the tribes were of decisive importance to the success of the imam. Some

of the non-sayyid scholars who are listed in al-Jurmūzī received an "upgrade" to elevate their status. Thus, ʿAbdallāh b. Saʿīd al-Muhallā, who is mentioned in al-Sharafī only due to the fact that he died the same year as imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim, in al-Jurmūzī's rendering turned into "the learned judge, pride of the faith, eye of the rightly-guided scholars" (*al-qāḍī al-ʿallāma fakhr al-dīn ʿayn al-ʿulamāʾ al-rāshidīn*), and the teacher of two imams, a fact that al-Sharafī somehow overlooked.[44] The explanation for this might be the following: the extended al-Muhallā family came to play an important role in the later Qasimid imamate, joining the ranks of scholar-administrators in the government; the elevation of their ancestor in al-Jurmūzī's *sīra* was a response to developments that took place during the rule of imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad and al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl.[45] Such interventions demonstrate how the process of historical reflection about the early Qasimid period was influenced by the interests, patronage networks, and ambitions of new elites, especially non-sayyid scholars who rose to power under subsequent Qasimid imams.

The first decade of the uprising and the 1016/1607 treaty

Having put together a circle of supporters, imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim issued his *daʿwa* on Mt. Qāra, in the Ḥajja region where he had been hiding for a year under the protection of shaykh Abū Zayd b. Sirāj.[46] Compared to imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's *daʿwa,* imam al-Manṣūr had a very quiet ceremony; there was no oath of allegiance under a tree (*bayʿat al-shajara,* see chapter 1 on the connotations), and no numerous delegations, and the location for the announcement was not

[44] Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 220a; al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 62.
[45] The development of al-Muhallā family identity is visible in the records of births, marriages, breast feeding (a major strategy for developing contacts with sayyid families in particular), and deaths of family members dating to the second half of the 11th century AH, recorded in NF D.244.ar, ff. 3a, 11b-12b, 109a.
[46] Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 127a; al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 95–96.

an acclaimed *hijra.* In fact, the imam's first decade in power was an incessant military campaign, and his *daʿwa* was appropriately short, the proclamation swiftly followed by military action.

The attacks during the first year of the uprising went in several directions. The imam led the campaign in al-Ahnūm, a former Āl al-Muʾayyad stronghold; his Ḥamāṭa allies focused on Ḥayma, Ḥarāz, Ānis and the Dhamār plain, and his uncle ʿĀmir campaigned in the areas under the control of the Shams al-Dīns (Jabal Tays, al-Shāḥidhīya).[47] Possibly due to the surprise factor and the ability to start attacks in several directions, the first year of the uprising was marked by several successes. For several months the Ḥamāṭa held Dhamār thanks to local support,[48] the Sharaf region almost entirely fell into the hands of the imam's uncle, and in the regions north of Ṣanʿāʾ the Ottomans and their allies suffered several defeats, particularly in the mountain pass Naqīl ʿUjayb.[49] In this year the imam also captured Shahāra, which would become the center of his imamate after the 1016/1608 treaty.[50] The victories continued in early 1007/1599, when the uncle of the imam captured al-Ṭawīla, a fort that belonged to the Shams al-Dīns, and took members of this family hostage.[51] The northern regions were seemingly falling out of Ottoman control. The governor at the time, Ḥasan Pasha, feeling desperate, requested help from ʿAlī Pasha, his former subordinate and then governor of Ḥabasha (Abyssinia). ʿAlī Pasha died in battle shortly after his arrival, compounding Ottoman misfortunes.[52]

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[47] Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, ff. 130b, 131b, 133a.
[48] Notably, even though the faqīh controlled the city, the Turkish garrison in the fort of Dhamār remained in place and under siege. Al-Sharafī, NF C.101.ar, ff. 139ab: *kān hādhā-l-faqīh [Yūsuf al-Ḥamāṭī] … muʿaẓẓaman* ʿinda … ahl tilka al-jihāt … wa kān muṭāʿan fīhim li-mā yaʿrifūnahu min al-ʿilm wa-l-faḍl.*
[49] ʿĪsā Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ fī mā ḥadatha baʿd al-miʾa al-tāsiʿa min al-fitan wa-l-futūḥ*, ed. Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad al-Maqḥafī (Ṣanʿāʾ: Markaz ʿAbbādī li-l-dirāsāt wa-l-nashr, 1424), 235, 236, 242; al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 108.
[50] Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 137a.
[51] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 244.
[52] Ibn Luṭfallāh, 244.

The Qasimid victory streak, however, was short. The main issue was that the imam's army was not a professional unit and did not have a coherent strategy. The imam did not have a group of family members to rely on, aside from his uncle ʿĀmir, and the sons of the imam were at the time too young to lead an army or head an administration.[53] As a result, command was entrusted to several charismatic leaders who were not working in coordination. At one point, during the campaign in Sharaf al-Dīn territories, the commanders of the imam – his uncle ʿĀmir and sayyid ʿAlī b. Ṣalāḥ – could not agree on who should be the *wālī* of Jabal Tays.[54] As a result they divided their forces and went on in different directions, an unsound strategy in a campaign against the Ottomans. In addition, the army's supplies were short – the tribal militias that rose in response to al-Manṣūr Qāsim's call had limited access to firearms and other supplies, like gunpowder.[55]

It did not help the imam that he was facing an Ottoman force led by talented commanders, among them Sinān, the future pasha of Yemen. Sinān was seen by Qasimid historians as a dangerous opponent, not only due to his military skills but also because of his curiosity. Al-Sharafī reports that in devising his strategy Sinān turned to Yemeni advisors to ask whether similar uprisings had happened in Yemen before and what, in their estimate, led to their weakening.[56] This acknowledgment of the enemy's sophistication contains an assessment by al-Sharafī himself of what the weak point of the imam's campaign was – the reliance on tribal forces and underlying it the absence of sayyid support for the campaign. This was particularly visible in the failed attempt to secure

[53] Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 143a. In 1008/1600, the shaykhs of Ḥajūr asked the imam to appoint his son Muḥammad, the future imam al-Muʾayyad, as their wālī. This experiment did not end well – the shaykhs of the region ended up joining the Shams al-Dīns. Al-Sharafī, f. 155a.
[54] Al-Sharafī, NF C.101.ar, f. 135a.
[55] It is not a coincidence that one of the *karamāt,* miracles, of the imam reported in this period is the wondrous ability to discover provisions of gunpowder. See, for example, al-Sharafī, NF C.101.ar, f. 138b.
[56] Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 139a.

Khawlān Ṣaʿda – local Āl al-Muʾayyadī sayyids refused to give up their own ambitions for leadership in favor of the imam and the campaign therefore stalled.[57]

As a result, within two years the Ottomans pushed imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim out of the northern highlands and into the peripheral region of Baraṭ. The Ḥamāṭīs in Dhamār were the first to succumb, already in 1006/1598.[58] The uncle of the imam was captured by the Ottomans and executed in 1008/1600.[59] In 1010/1602 the imam himself was forced to escape the besieged Shahāra, leaving his family behind. He clearly feared for his life, as he left his brother-in-law, Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī al-Jaḥḥāfī, in charge as the executor of his will.[60] Those left behind held the fort for another year, until 1011/1603 when they surrendered to the Shams al-Dīns of Kawkabān. With Shahāra the imam lost his eldest sons – the future imam al-Muʾayyad, Muḥammad, and his brother Aḥmad – together with his wives and daughters and some of his most trusted advisors. They all became hostages of the Shams al-Dīns of Kawkabān for the next seven years.[61]

The years between the fall of Shahāra and the conclusion of the 1016/1607 treaty with the Ottomans were probably some of the hardest in the imamate's history. For two years the imam remained in Baraṭ with his three sons, while in al-Ḥayma the remnants of the Ḥamāṭī forces continued to raid the Ottomans with only modest success.[62] Baraṭ, in contrast to al-Sharaf, was a

[57] Al-Sharafī, NF C.101.ar, f. 142a.
[58] Al-Sharafī, NF C.101.ar, f. 140a.
[59] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 248.
[60] The imam was married to Zaynab bint ʿAlī b. al-Mahdī al-Jaḥḥāfī, the niece of Ibrāhīm. al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 235.
[61] Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 167a; Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 252. The decision to leave a large part of the family in besieged Shahāra as the imam escaped to Baraṭ with three other sons - ʿAlī, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn – and two advisors appears strategic. It is most probable that there was a calculation that those taken hostage would have a better survival chance than those who would have to hide in the mountains of Baraṭ.
[62] ʿAlī b. Yūsuf al-Ḥamāṭī, the son of the qāḍī who captured Dhamār, continued his attacks on the Ottomans until his death in 1016/1607. Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, ff. 164ab, 169a, 172b, 175a; al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 299.

peripheral region, even further away from the core of the northern highlands than the Jawf that lay to the south of Baraṭ.[63] The closest Ottoman contingent was in Ṣaʿda and was not large; this gave the imam more flexibility. Despite this, the imam, according to al-Jurmūzī, could not really settle in Baraṭ. To strengthen the alliance with local tribes, among them the Dhū Muḥammad, he married his son to one of the local shaykh's daughters.[64] At the same time he found himself at war with the local Ismāʿīlīs of the Yām tribe, an unnecessary distraction at the time.[65] It seems that the imam's survival in Baraṭ was largely due to the authority of qāḍī ʿAlī b. Qāsim al-ʿAnsī al-ʿIyānī, whose family continued to hold the position of *ḥākim* (governor) of Baraṭ for several generations.[66] Baraṭ was not prosperous, but the imam found useful resources there that allowed him to increase the gunpowder and bullet provisions of his army.[67]

In 1013/1605, the imam left Baraṭ to continue his campaign in Wādiʿa, a region closer to al-Ahnūm. He spent the next two years among the Banū Dhuwayb.[68] His timing was well-planned – that was the year when Ḥasan Pasha was recalled from Yemen and Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b.

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[63] According to later Qasimid historians, the region was controlled by a handful of imams, imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn being the last one before al-Manṣūr Qāsim. Paul Dresch, *The Rules of Barat. Tribal Documents from Yemen: Texts and Translation*, Textes et documents sur la péninsule Arabique (Sanaa: Centre français d'archéologie et de sciences sociales, 2016), 60–74, http://books.openedition.org/cefas/752; ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī al-Wazīr, *Tārīkh al-Yaman khilāl al-qarn al-ḥādī ʿashar al-hijrī - al-sābiʿ ʿashar al-mīlādī 1045-1090 (1635-168) al-musammā Tārīkh ṭabaq al-ḥalwā wa ṣaḥāf al-mann wa-l-salwā*, ed. Muḥammad ʻAbd al-Raḥīm Jāzim (Beirut: Dār al-Masīra, 1985), 274.

[64] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 237, 254.

[65] al-Jurmūzī, 254. The Yām tribe and its Ismāʿīlī leaders of the Makramī family continued to control the areas around Najrān till the twentieth century. G. R. Smith, "Yām,"; I. Poonawala, "Al-Makramī," in *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2012.

[66] Dresch, *The Rules of Barat. Tribal Documents from Yemen*, 60–74.

[67] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 266.

[68] al-Jurmūzī, 285. The Banū Dhuwayb were in a difficult position, as the support of the imam cost them their leadership; their shaykhs were taken to Ottoman Ṣaʿda as hostages. Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 178b.

Shams al-Dīn of Kawkabān died.[69] While the political situation was shifting, the imam found a new ally who was seeking to adjust the political balance for his own reasons – amīr ʿAbd al-Raḥīm of the Āl Muṭahhar. This amīr had already switched to the side of the imam in 1006/1598, however, the Ottomans had lured him back with the promise of control over Ḥajja and al-Sharaf. With the change of governors the amīr started to worry about his position and interpreted some communications from Sinān Pasha, the new governor, as an indication of his impending removal.[70]

The support of amīr ʿAbd al-Raḥīm changed the situation for imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim. With the professional and well-equipped military units of this sayyid the imam was able to capture new territories in the highlands. The position of the Ottomans was further exacerbated by the tribulations of the Shams al-Dīns in Kawkabān, who lost two leaders in two years, and the removal of Sinān Pasha from his position as governor in 1016/1607.[71] Pressured by the arrival of the newly appointed governor Jaʿfer Pasha and seeing his allies, the Shams al-Dīns, weakened, Sinān Pasha started truce negotiations with the imam. These negotiations had above all symbolic importance as they recognized the existence of an independent Zaydi imamate in the northern highlands.

The second decade and the 1028/1619 peace agreement

The 1016/1607 truce gave imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim an opportunity to settle in Shahāra. He was reunited with his family and supporters who were all released from their imprisonment in Kawkabān, and he now had a firmer base for his state. The sense of importance of this agreement was underlined by contemporaries, who compared it to the peace at Ḥudaybīya.[72] Even though the

[69] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 253–54.
[70] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 273–74.
[71] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 254, 257, 262.
[72] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 323. Parallels to the Prophet's *sīra* abound in al-Jurmūzī and deserve a separate study.

imam lost some of his closest allies, what he gained – a formal recognition from the Ottoman side – was an asset of great value, an advertisement for the benefits of the Zaydi imamate that redeemed the disaster of imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan al-Muʾayyadī's exile to Istanbul and imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim's early misfortunes.[73] Now the imam had time to build up his claims to legitimate rule and to expand his connections to Yemeni elites.

Shahāra, despite its long history, truly started to develop only under the Ṣaʿda-based al-Muʾayyadī imams.[74] It held a strategic position at an equal distance from Ṣanʿāʾ and Ṣaʿda, while at the same time being not as easily accessible as Ḥajja, another major town and region at the crossroads between Zaydi Yemen's two most important urban centers. The fact that the imam also controlled Wādiʿa and al-ʿUṣaymāt allowed him to effectively cut off the northern territories, Baraṭ, the Jawf and Ṣaʿda, from the Ottomans.[75]

In asserting his claims to legitimate rule, the imam's efforts went in several directions. One direction was proclamations against the Ismāʿīlīs of the Yām tribe and the Sufis, in which he underlined his scholarly credentials.[76] This attention to the Ismāʿīlīs remaining in the north was not coincidental – while open war with the Ottomans was off-limits, an effort to uproot some of the oldest opponents of Zaydism in the region was a noble task. Additionally, it sought to counter an impression that some observers could have that the imam only gained recognition as a leader of

[73] Sayyid Muṣṭafā Sālim is, possibly, one of the first historians to remark on the structural importance of the 1016/1607 peace for the political stabilization of the Qasimid imamate. Sayyid Muṣṭafā Sālim, *al-Fatḥ al-ʿuthmānī al-awwal li-l-Yaman. 1538-1635*, 1st ed. (Cairo: Maʿhad al-buḥūth wa-l-dirāsāt al-ʿarabīya, 1969), 364.
[74] al-Shahārī, *Shahāra fī tārīkh al-Yaman*, 67.
[75] al-Shahārī, 96–97.
[76] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 323–36. In Zaydism, transmission of works from imams and authors was highly valued. In the absence of an imam as his direct teacher, al-Manṣūr Qāsim cited three scholars as his teachers – the sayyids Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī al-Jaḥḥāfī, Amīr al-Dīn b. ʿAbdallāh and Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh Ibn al-Wazīr. al-Jurmūzī, 326.

the Zaydi community when his rule was validated by the Ottomans. The intellectual sparring with the Sufis was a more direct affront to the Ottomans, of course, but not so offensive as to provoke military action.

Another direction of the imam's efforts was the transformation of Shahāra into a major religious and educational center. To this end, in imitation of the Ottomans, the imam rebuilt the town of Shahāra and its surroundings, investing effort in the local food supply and infrastructure as well as religious architecture. The imam is credited with organizing the production of coffee (*bunn*), sugar (*qand*), and rice (*aruzz*) in wādī Ṣawmal next to Shahāra.[77] In the decade between 1016/1607 and 1028/1619 two mosques and a caravanserai, *samsara,* were built in Shahāra.[78] The new scholarly center attracted scholars, and a by-product of this was a slow increase of textual production in the city; the process of scholarly production and exchange intensified even further after the 1028/1619 treaty.[79] To enshrine the image of the imam and his success, the construction of a mausoleum for the imam began; a cemetery for his supporters developed around it. Already in 1022/1613 one of his supporters who was buried in Shahāra was marked as buried in the *qubba* of the imam.[80] The preparations for the future enshrining of the imamate's founder indicate that the 1016/1607 treaty was seen as a breakthrough for the Qasimid state.

As a result of the 1016/1607 treaty and the decade of peace, the number of connections of the imam with 'old' Yemeni elites started to grow while his supporters built a foundation for the

[77] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 287, 336. These lands and their income were his private property, rather than part of the treasury.
[78] al-Jurmūzī, 322; al-Shahārī, *Shahāra fī tārīkh al-Yaman*, 50.
[79] One example of a manuscript produced in Shahāra in this period is NF F.282.ar (1022/1613). Manuscripts produced in the decade after 1028/1619 include NF F.153.ar (f. 11a – a study certificate dated 1029/1620), NF F.268.ar (1032/1623), NF F.274.ar (includes ijāzas from imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim and imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad, the latter on f. 50a dated 1031/1622), NF E.257.ar (restoration of the manuscript completed in 1035/1626, see f. 207a).
[80] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 47.

formation of the 'new' elites of the Qasimid imamate. Among the 'new' elites of this period are, for example, the al-Akwaʿ family of scholars who held prominent positions in the Qasimid imamate.[81] Earlier allies, like the Jaḥḥāf sayyid family, continued to deepen their pre-existing connection to the imam. In the second decade of the imamate's existence, the Jaḥḥāf sayyid family further consolidated their link to the imam through marriage. In 1019/1610 Taqīya bint Shams al-Dīn al-Jaḥḥāfī, the imam's third wife, gave birth to Ismāʿīl, the future third imam of the dynasty known by his regnal title al-Mutawakkil.[82]

Another family that benefited from this period of peace in the orbit of the Qasimid imam were the Ibn Abī Rijāl.[83] They were instrumental in building the Qasimid alliance with the neighboring Arḥab and Khārif tribal confederations. This scholarly family had long resided in the *hijra* Ḥayṭ Ḥumrān in the territory of the banū Jubar, a subgroup of the Khārif.[84] The qāḍī al-Hādī b. ʿAbdallāh Ibn Abī al-Rijāl sponsored mosques in Khārif territory, especially those under the control of the banū Jubar and Ṣayyad, as well as in Arḥab territory, controlled by the two subdivisions of this confederation, the banū Dhaybān and banū Zihayr, whose territories neighbor the regions under control of the banū Jubar.[85] Al-Jurmūzī lists six mosques that this scholar sponsored in tribal

[81] NF F.282.ar, copied by ʿAlī b. Ṣāliḥ al-Akwaʿ in Shahāra in 1022/1613 is one piece of evidence that points to this development. ʿAlī b. Ṣāliḥ was one of the first members of the Akwaʿ family to move to Shahāra in the Qasimid period; he is considered the founder of the Akwaʿ family that still reside in Yemen. He started his career in the circle of imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan al-Muʾayyadī, but then joined imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim whom he served as treasurer. His sons Ḥasan, ʿIzz al-Dīn went on to serve the Qasimid imams. Ismāʿīl b. ʿAlī al-Akwaʿ, *Tārīkh aʿlām Āl al-Akwaʿ* (Beirut: Dār al-fikr al-muʿāṣir, 1990), 18, 55–59, 90–91, 114–15.
[82] al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 229b.
[83] The scholarly families also started to build connections with each other in this period. One of the prominent Akwaʿ family members, ʿIzz al-Dīn b. ʿAlī b. Ṣalāḥ al-Akwaʿ married Maryam, a woman from the Ibn Abī al-Rijāl family. al-Akwaʿ, *Tārīkh aʿlām Āl al-Akwaʿ*, 91.
[84] al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 1, p. 548.
[85] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 60–61. al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 2, p. 1927.

areas.[86] This mission mattered because it enhanced the image of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim as a religious, as well as political leader, and showed his care for the well-being of tribal populations.

The survival of the imam's political project was not predestined, despite the upbeat narratives of his contemporary historians. Were it not for the peace of 1016/1607, the imam would not have had a chance to develop the core of his imamate. The survival of the young Qasimid state in the following decade was mostly due to the inability of the Ottoman side to uproot him in light of internal conflicts, like the 1022/1613 conflict between Jaʿfer Pasha and Ottoman officials who saw his tenure as illegal after the death of a newly appointed governor.[87] The imam attempted to use this opportunity to expand his rule, but instead his son Ḥasan b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim was captured by the Ottomans and kept imprisoned in Ṣanʿāʾ until 1031/1622.[88] Then al-Manṣūr Qāsim nearly lost Shahāra again and was forced to spend 1022-23/1613-14 outside of this region desperately rallying tribes in Wādiʿa and Ṣaʿda to defend Shahāra, until – by accident and miscalculation – the Ottoman forces surrounding the region suffered a major defeat in Ghārib Athla, a mountain pass.[89] But even with this major victory, the position of the imam vis-à-vis the Ottomans did not change when power was transferred from Jaʿfer Pasha to Muḥammad Rāghib Pasha in 1026/1617. Ahead of the arrival of the new governor in 1025/1616, a truce was concluded with imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim, but his men were not released from imprisonment in Ṣanʿāʾ. Another ten-year long peace treaty was concluded in 1028/1619; again, the territorial gains of the imam were minimal.

Thus, by the end of his rule, imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim's main political achievement was the official recognition of his imamate by the Ottomans. It was a unique situation in Yemeni history

[86] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 60–61.
[87] al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 182b; Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 270–79.
[88] al-Sharafī, NF C.101.ar, ff. 192a, 239a; Kānī Çelebi, *Bughyat al-khāṭir wa nuzhat al-nāẓir,* NF E.391.ar, f. 141a.
[89] al-Shahārī, *Shahāra fī tārīkh al-Yaman*, 101–2.

for the imamate's existence to be effectively validated through written accords with an enemy. No peace treaty with the Rasulids or the Tahirids from the earlier periods of Zaydi history would have been as important. As a result of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim's efforts, Shahāra gained and kept its new status as a capital of the imamate. His efforts at state-building survived despite military difficulties, a peripheral geographical position and, in 1028/1619, a deadly famine combined with an epidemic, earthquakes and population displacement. The political project survived even in the face of the appearance of an alternative candidate for the imamate, Nāṣir b. Muḥammad al-Ghurbānī, who had previously served the Qasimids and in 1028/1619 proclaimed himself the *mahdī*.[90] The only question that remained to be solved was that of succession.

Succession: theory

Imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim, like imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, had a large family. He married five times and had fifteen children from his marriages. Despite this, in his works on Zaydi theology and law, imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim did not support the idea of dynastic transmission of power. Indeed, this did not serve his own goals as imam – he personally benefited from the inbuilt ideas of meritocracy that define the Zaydi theory of the imamate. Imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim made no statements that can be interpreted as support for a dynastic transmission of power or for a redefinition of the qualifications for the imamate. However, as the following analysis of the imam's work and the surrounding commentaries demonstrates, al-Manṣūr Qāsim sowed the seeds of the theory and

[90] Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, ff. 208b, 219b; Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr wa-majmaʿ al-buḥūr fī tarājim rijāl al-zaydīya*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raqīb Muṭahhar Muḥammad Ḥajar, 1st ed. (Ṣaʿda: Markaz Ahl al-Bayt li-l-dirāsāt al-islāmīya, 2004), vol. 1, p. 378. Notably, al-Jurmūzī lists this sayyid in the first class of supporters of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim. al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 55.

practice of a new type of Zaydi imamate: characterized by dynastic transmission of power and amended qualifications for the imamate.

The imamate was not an elective office, and imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim and his commentators stressed that fact, underlining its divine quality and drawing parallels between the imamate and prophethood. The definition of the imamate that al-Manṣūr Qāsim provided included a statement that no mortal had a say over him (*lā yakūn fawq yadihi makhlūq*).[91] It is probably not a coincidence that imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim dealt with the question of the imamate in a work on *uṣūl al-dīn* rather than fiqh.[92] However the agreement of the community on the figure of the imam, *ijmāʿ,* was an important component of the legality of the claim to the imamate, not the least if one considered the historical examples, namely, the selection of the leader of the Muslim community after the death of the Prophet. Here, imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim and his supporters needed to draw a line between recognizing the necessity of *ijmāʿ* and limiting the circle of people qualified to express it. In his *Kitāb al-irshād,* imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim reminded his readers that dissent among sayyids, who alone could be leaders of the community, was a result of mistakes that they committed.[93] Those members of the Ahl al-Bayt, he wrote, who presented opposing opinions should be measured against the Qur'an and the Sunna, and only those whose opinions did not contradict those

[91] Qāsim b. Muḥammad al-Manṣūr billāh, *al-Asās li-ʿaqāʾid al-akyās fī maʿrifat rabb al-ʿālamīn waʿadlihi fī-l-makhlūqīn wa mā yattaṣil bi-dhālika min uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Albīr Naṣrī Nādir (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalīʿa li-l-ṭabāʿa wa-l-nashr, 1980), 159. The parallel to prophethood (*nubuwwa*) and the divine choice of the candidate for the imamate is stressed in Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Sharafī's commentary on the *Kitāb al-asās.* Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Sharafī, *Kitāb ʿuddat al-akyās fī sharḥ maʿānī al-asās*, ed. Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā al-Yūsufī (Ṣanʿāʾ: Dār al-Ḥikma al-yamānīya, 1995), vol. 2, pp. 112, 114.

[92] The subject of the imamate and such matters as requirements for it in the pre-Ottoman period formed part of a section called *al-siyar,* that was usually treated in works on fiqh. See for example Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā Ibn al-Murtaḍa, *Kitāb al-Azhār fī fiqh al-aʾimma al-aṭhār*, 1982, 313–27.

[93] Qāsim b. Muḥammad al-Manṣūr billāh, *al-Irshād ilā sabīl al-rashād. Baḥth fī ḥukm al-ikhtilāf fī-l-dīn*, ed. Muḥammad Yaḥyā Sāliḥ ʿAzzān (Ṣanʿāʾ: Dār al-Ḥikma al-yamānīya, 1996), 69–73.

sources, could be followed.[94] This can be interpreted as a warning to those sayyids who joined the Ottoman side and refused to come to the imam's support – any number of relevant Qur'anic verses and prophetic hadith could be adduced to demonstrate that they were opposing the rightful leader and their vote was of no consequence for such a transmission of power.

An important point in the Zaydi theory of the imamate is the question of *ijtihad,* ability to reason independently on matters of Islamic law. Al-Sharafī, a close supporter of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim and author of a chronicle of his deeds, clarifies in the commentary on the imam's *Kitāb al-asās* that the *ijtihād* expected of an imam is limited. First, it is limited to a certain set of sciences, namely, Arabic linguistics (*ʿilm al-ʿarabīya*), Qur'anic verses of importance to legal rulings (*āyāt al-aḥkām*), knowledge of the Sunna of the Prophet (*maʿrifat sunnat al-rasūl*), matters of consensus (*masāʾil al-ijmāʿ*) and the science of *uṣūl al-fiqh.* Second, the level of knowledge that was expected of an imam in these subjects was by no means advanced.[95] In the hierarchy of qualities that come before knowledge as a criterion for the imamate is scrupulousness (*waraʿ*), which al-Sharafī posits as the key quality of successful imams; he goes as far as to argue that piety had always been more important than *ijtihād* for the imamate.[96] This interpretation is further normalized in a commentary

[94] al-Manṣūr billāh, 73–75. The legal implications of this stance for Zaydism as a madhhab are discussed in Bernard Haykel and Aron Zysow, "What Makes a Maḏhab a Maḏhab: Zaydī Debates on the Structure of Legal Authority," *Arabica* 59, no. 3–4 (January 1, 2012): 344–48.

[95] *Al-qadr alladhī yaḥtājuhu al-imām min al-ʿulūm al-madhkūra sahl yasīr ghayr ʿasīr.* al-Sharafī, *Kitāb ʿuddat al-akyās fī sharḥ maʿānī al-asās*, vol. 2, p. 128. The term *waraʿ* is often used in Sufi discourses; it is unclear whether there was an influence on Zaydi thought in regard to its usage. See. D. Urvoy, "Waraʿ," in *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2012. Notably, imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim in his appointment of his son Aḥmad wrote of *taqwā,* piety, as the most important thing for a ruler. al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 16.

[96] "The foundation of the imamate and its turning point is piety and those who study the biographies (*siyar*) of previous imams know the truth of this statement." *ʿUmdat al-imāma wa raḥāhā alladhī tadūr ʿalayhi huwa al-waraʿ wa-man waqafa ʿalā siyar al-aʾimma al-mutaqaddimīn ʿalayhim al-salām ʿalima ṣidq mā qulnā.* al-Sharafī, *Kitāb ʿuddat al-akyās fī sharḥ maʿānī al-asās*, vol. 2, p. 128.

on the short version (*mukhtasar*) of *al-Asās* composed by imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim. In this commentary titled *Kitāb hidāyat al-akyās ilā ʿirfān asrār lubb al-asās*, qāḍī Jaʿfar b. ʿAlī al-Ẓafīrī (d. 1109/1698) repeats the argument of al-Sharafī and adds to it a historical argument based on the study of biographies of previous imams, thus enhancing the weight of historical precedent for this idea.[97]

The debate on the qualities of the imam, and especially the expected level of *ijtihād,* has a long history in Zaydism; already in the years preceding imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's rise to power it was very much under scrutiny by leading Zaydi thinkers.[98] Data from imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim's circle shows that the debate was not simply revitalized when he was in power, but actually came to a resolution, in which scholars supported the opinion that piety stood above knowledge and even that the knowledge expected of the imam was of a limited kind. This laid a foundation for the development of the Qasimid imamate in the later period, when, as Haykel demonstrates, the requirement for *ijtihād* was dropped, and the dynastic transmission of power was legitimized.[99]

Imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim and his intellectual circle do not argue in their writings for a hereditary succession to the imamate. However, the idea and practice of hereditary succession in Zaydi Yemen was certainly not novel by imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim's time; already in the pre-

[97] Jaʿfar b. ʿAlī al-Zafīrī, *Kitāb hidāyat al-akyās ilā ʿirfān asrār lubb al-asās,* HSVM Islamic Manuscripts, Third Series no. 640, f. 177b. https://dpul.princeton.edu/catalog/2b89e869b4291de838a770ed1db3f744 Accessed May 7, 2021. Al-Ẓafīrī trained in Shahāra under the guidance of qāḍī Aḥmad b. Saʿd al-Dīn al-Miswarī, an important Qasimid statesman, and in Ḍūrān, where he studied with imam al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim. His interpretation can therefore be seen as representative of the inner Qasimid circle. On the author see ʿAbd al-Salām b. ʿAbbās al-Wajīh, *Aʿlām al-muʾallifīn al-zaydīya* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-thaqāfīya, 1999), 282–83.

[98] Damaris Wilmers, *Beyond Schools: Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Wazīr's (d. 840/1436) Epistemology of Ambiguity*, Islamic History and Civilization (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2018), 274–79.

[99] Bernard Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muhammad al-Shawkānī*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilisation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 69–70.

Ottoman period the Banū al-Wazīr imams in Ṣanʿāʾ, and in Ṣaʿda the Āl al-Muʾayyad clan, both effectively established dynasties. Neither employed dynastic language, however, and they claimed to be following the rules of meritocracy. A novelty of this pre-Ottoman transformation of political ideas was that imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn employed inheritance language in support of transmitting power to his son Muṭahhar in a period of crisis, during the 933/1527 plague (see chapter 1). Imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim, too, used his will as an opportunity to mark his eldest son, Muḥammad, as his heir and to define his obligation as a leader.[100] Imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim's will is in strong contrast to that of the will of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn in that he addressed only his eldest son and none of his other children, unlike imam Yaḥyā. This, in combination with Muḥammad's appointments after his release from Kawkabān, strengthened the argument for his choice as successor – they indicated that he had the necessary experience to lead the imamate.

These were the theoretical underpinnings of the transfer of power in the first generation of Qasimid imams. Ideas of meritocracy in the selection of imams had not yet been set aside, but there were already hints at possible limitations to the classical requirements. While no direct indication of a hereditary transmission of power is visible, some elements, especially the will of the imam, can be construed as a potential foundation for a dynasty. It is notable that imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim did not leave clear instructions on his succession; this meant that elites of the Qasimid imamate gained an important role in determining the future trajectory of the imamate. The way in which the second Qasimid imam, al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad, came to power clearly illustrates this.

[100] Qāsim b. Muḥammad al-Manṣūr billāh, *Majmūʾ kutub wa-rasāʾil al-imām al-Manṣūr billāh al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām b. ʿAbbās al-Wajīh, 1st ed. (Ṣanʿāʾ: Muʾassasat al-imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-thaqāfīya, 2003), 357–61.

Securing a future for the imamate: Imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad (1029-1054/1620-1644)

Imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad, an able administrator and military leader, succeeded in pushing the Ottomans out of Yemen and establishing a trajectory for the development of the new Qasimid state. In this new polity, the imam was a top administrator selected by a small elite group of sayyids and scholars and had to balance against powerful members of his own family. Dynastic features were taking hold as the meritocratic principles were set aside and the selection of candidates was limited to the Qasimid family. The new state rapidly developed a military and administrative system that was adapted to ousting the Ottomans and reintegrating their Yemeni allies and therefore drew inspiration from the Ottoman state model. The successful expansion of the Qasimid imamate laid the foundation of a time of prosperity during which the Yemeni state came to be known as the "coffee imamate."

Succession: practice

The succession of imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad is an episode in the history of the early Qasimid imamate that shows the new balance between the leader of the state and the elites. It points to the development of competing groups within the Qasimid state, possibly even factionalism, and the skills that an imam (or a candidate for the imamate) needed to succeed. Our main sources on the ascent of imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad are al-Jurmūzī and al-Sharafī, who, as will be shown below, provide parallel narratives of the event with slightly different accents. This might be connected to the position of both scholars in the new Qasimid elite hierarchy. Al-Sharafī belonged to the 'old guard' of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim and was a sayyid of importance in the Qasimid state by the time the ascent of imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad took place. Al-Jurmūzī

was an upstart in comparison to al-Sharafī and owed his career to al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad and later al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl, rather than to imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim.[101] The closeness to these Qasimid imams possibly influenced his account of the events surrounding al-Muʾayyad's succession. It is, therefore, likely that his narrative provides a glimpse into how imam al-Muʾayyad himself saw this event or, at the very least, how he wanted this event to be remembered.

A close reading and analysis of both sources allows us to reconstruct the sequence of events, identify the main participants and discern an inner conflict in elite Qasimid circles. Imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim fell ill in rabīʿ al-awwal 1029 / February 1620, and as it became clear that he would not recover, letters were sent to his closest supporters summoning them to Shahāra. His son Muḥammad was already in town as he had administrative responsibilities there, and his brother Ḥusayn was summoned from a military campaign. At the time of the imam's death three of his sons could effectively vie for the position of imam – Muḥammad, Ḥusayn, and Aḥmad. Neither al-Sharafī nor al-Jurmūzī mentions Aḥmad, who was campaigning in Ṣaʿda at the time, in their accounts of the succession. Another adult son, Ḥasan, though skilled in administrative and military matters, was excluded from consideration due to his imprisonment in Ṣanʿāʾ.

[101] Al-Jurmūzī claimed descent from the Banū al-Wazīr through the line of Yūsuf b. al-Murtaḍā b. Mufaḍḍal. A possible ancestor called al-Muntaṣir appears in the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* but this family history does not mention that he had sons or that he had relocated to a *hijra* called al-Jurmūz. This makes the confirmation of the lineage not possible at this moment. *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 55b, 89a. The connection of al-Jurmūzī to al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad's administration is visible also in his biography of the imam that employs first-person narrative, unlike his *sīra* of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim, as demonstrated in al-Thawr's meticulous analysis. Amat al-Malik Ismāʿīl Qāsim al-Thawr, "Tamhīd (Introduction)," in *Bināʾ al-dawla al-qāsīmīya fi-l-Yaman fī ʿahd al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim, 990-1054 / 1582-1644. Maʿa taḥqīq makhṭūṭat al-Jawhara al-munīra fī jumal min ʿuyūn al-sīra (juzʾān) li-l-Muṭahhar ibn Muḥammad al-Jurmūzī. Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, vol. 1 (Ṣanʿāʾ: Muʾassasat al-imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-thaqāfīya, 2008), 163–66.

Some of the members of the Qasimid elite were also already present in Shahāra. The summoning of leading sayyids and scholars of the Qasimid imamate shows the character of the early Qasimid state; to succeed in a bid for power, the heir had to secure the support of stakeholders in the political project. On the day when the imam died, the news of his death was concealed from the public so that a council (*majlis)* of thirty-one could deliberate on the succession.[102] This meeting was called by al-Jurmūzī a *shūrā,* consultative body. Al-Jurmūzī provides a list of the members of this *shūrā.*[103] It included nineteen sayyids, eleven scholars, and one tribal leader (see table below). Of these thirty-one members of the council, twenty-one, or two-thirds, appear on the list of supporters of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim discussed earlier, and eight of the remaining ten participants were their relatives. The formation of new elite families of sayyids and scholars is visible in the concentration of families who attended this meeting. Fourteen of the nineteen sayyids represented six sayyids clans, with the clan from Miḥrāb the most numerous with five representatives. Seven of the eleven scholars in their turn represented three families, with the Miswarī clan appearing the most numerous with four family members. It is this small, tight-knit elite group that decided which of the two sons of the imam (Muḥammad or Ḥusayn) invited to the deliberations was to assume the imamate.

[102] *Ijtamaʿ al-aʿyān min al-sāda wa-l-quḍāh wa-l-shīʿa wa-dār al-ḥadīth*. Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 222a. The concealment of the news is only reported by al-Jurmūzī. al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 485.
[103] al-Jurmūzī, 485–87.

Table 5. Members of the 1029/1620 *shūrā*

Name	*Estate*	*Family*	*Geography*	*Tabaqa (Nubdha)*	*Year joined*
Amīr al-Dīn b. ʿAbdallāh b. Na-hshal	sayyid	n/d	n/d	1	1006
Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Ṣalāḥ al-Sharafī	sayyid	Sharafī	n/d	2	1022
Ḥasan b. Saʿīd al-ʿAyzarī	scholar	ʿAyzarī	Ahnūm	1	n/d
Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Miḥrābī* al-Hādawī	sayyid	n/d	Miḥrāb	1	1006
Ibrāhīm b. Yaḥyā al-Jaḥḥāfī	sayyid	Jaḥḥāf	Ẓulayma; Ḥajūr	2	n/d
Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ḥamzī	sayyid	Āl al-Ḥamza	n/d	2	1006
Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ghurbānī	sayyid	ʿIyānī	n/d	2	1016
Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ghash(a)m	scholar	n/d	Lāʿa, Ānis	2	n/d
Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbdallāh ʿUshaysh	sayyid	n/d	Ḥūth	1	n/d
Qāsim b. Najm al-Dīn al-Qāsimī	sayyid	n/d	Jabal Dharī, Miḥrāb	2	n/d
Ṣalāḥ b. ʿAbd al-Khāliq b. Yaḥyā al-Ḥabūrī	sayyid	n/d	n/d	1	n/d
Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī al-Ghurbānī	sayyid	ʿIyānī	n/d	1	1006
Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbdallāh Ḥanash	scholar	Ḥanash	Dhībīn, Khārif	1	n/d
Saʿd al-dīn b. Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Miswarī	scholar	Miswarī	n/d	1	n/d
Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā Ibn Ḥanash	scholar	Ḥanash	n/d	1	1006
ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad b. Ṣalāḥ al-Sharafī	sayyid	Sharafī	n/d	2	n/d
ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Miḥrābī	sayyid	n/d	Miḥrāb	1	1006
ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Miswarī	scholar	Miswarī	n/d	1	n/d
ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qāsimī	sayyid	n/d	Ḥaydān	1	n/d
ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Jamlūlī	scholar	Jamlūlī	Ahnūm	1	n/d

ʿĀmir b. Muḥammad al-Dhamārī	scholar	n/d	n/d	1	1006
Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥūthī	sayyid	n/d	Ḥūth	n/a	n/d
Aḥmad b. ʿIwāḍ al-Asadī	shaykh	Banū Asad	n/d	n/a	n/d
ʿAlī b. Ḥasan b. Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ḥamzī	sayyid	Āl al-Ḥamza	n/d	n/a	n/d
ʿAlī b. ʿAbdallāh al-ʿUbbālī	sayyid	ʿUbbālī	ʿUbbāl	n/a	n/d
ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Rūsī	scholar	n/d	Rūs	n/a	n/d
Aḥmad b. Saʿd al-Dīn al-Miswarī	scholar	Miswarī	n/d	n/a	n/d
Zayd b. ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn al-Miswarī	scholar	Miswarī	n/d	n/a	n/d
Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Miḥrābī	sayyid	n/d	Miḥrāb	n/a	n/d
al-Hādī b. Muḥammad al-Miḥrābī	sayyid	n/d	Miḥrāb	n/a	n/d
Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Miḥrābī	sayyid	n/d	Miḥrāb	n/a	n/d

Sources: al-Jurmūzī, Muṭahhar b. Muḥammad. *Kitāb al-nubdha al-mushīra ilā jumal min ʿuyūn al-sīra fī akhbār mawlānā amīr al-muʾminīn wa sayyid al-muslimīn al-manṣūr bi-llāh rabb al-ʿālamīn al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī*. Ṣanʿāʾ: Maktabat al-Yaman al-kubrā, 1980, pp. 44-70, 485-87; al-Jurmūzī, Muṭahhar b. Muḥammad. *Bināʾ al-dawla al-qāsimīya fī-l-Yaman fi ʿahd al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad ibn al-Qāsim, 990-1054 / 1582-1644. Maʿa taḥqīq makhṭūṭat al-Jawhara al-munīra fī jumal min ʿuyūn al-sīra (juzʾān) li-l-Muṭahhar ibn Muḥammad al-Jurmūzī. Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*. Edited by Amat al-Malik Ismāʿīl Qāsim al-Thawr. Ṣanʿāʾ: Muʾassasat al-imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-thaqāfīya, 2008, vol. 1, pp. 305-63; al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, ff. 222ab.

In al-Sharafī's narrative, the council's deliberations appear unconflicted. According to him, the *qāḍīs* ʿĀmir b. Muḥammad al-Dhamārī and Ḥasan b. Saʿīd al-ʿAyzarī, and sayyids Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī al-Ghurbānī and Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥūthī led everyone in a swift and uncontested decision that Muḥammad, who had already shown his ability to run a state, should succeed the imam.[104] Next, the council summoned Muḥammad and Ḥusayn and announced their decision to them. Muḥammad responded that it was the duty of the sayyids and the fuqahāʾ to choose who they believe fits from the family of the prophet (*yakhtār al-sāda wa-l-fuqahāʾ man yaṣluḥ min āl al-rasūl*). He added that he would be the first to pledge allegiance to the selected person and would help him and would hand over the *buyūt al-amwāl* to him (*annahu [Muḥammad] awwal man yubāyiʿ wa yaqūm bi-muʿāwanatihi wa yusallim mā ladayhi min buyut al-amwāl ilayhi*). This speech seems to have played the key role – as al-Sharafī narrates it – in affirming the council's decision and oaths of allegiance were immediately given.[105]

Even though al-Sharafī's description does not contain internal tensions, there are reasons to mistrust it. According to al-Jurmūzī, al-Sharafī was invited to the meeting, but could not attend it due to an illness; his family was represented by his two brothers, who might have told him about the event, but in any case, he was not a witness.[106] The fact that he does not indicate that he got this information from others is suspicious, as al-Sharafī usually acknowledges his informants. This initial doubt is furthered when we contrast al-Sharafī's narrative with al-Jurmūzī's.

According to al-Jurmūzī, the brothers Muḥammad and Ḥusayn were present at the meeting of the council from the beginning, i.e., before the council agreed on a candidate. It is at this point that Muḥammad spoke to the council on behalf of himself and his brother stating that they would

[104] Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, ff. 222ab.
[105] Al-Sharafī, NF C.101.ar, f. 222b.
[106] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 486.

support any agreed upon candidate.[107] This placement of Muḥammad's speech transforms it from a generous and traditional response, comparable, for example, to imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's refusal to take up the position of imam on the first invitation (see chapter 1), into a guarantee that the deceased imam's family would not fight against the candidate chosen by the council. If true, this could be a significant detail that shows how Muḥammad implied that he had under his control forces and financial resources that could cause such trouble.

Another shift of accent in al-Jurmūzī's narrative concerns the treasury, *bayt al-māl.* According to al-Jurmūzī, after the double-edged remark about support, Muḥammad first asked for the keys of the treasury and then demonstratively left them with the members of the council, thus signaling that he surrendered his administrative responsibilities and left them in charge. An alternative reading of this excerpt might indicate that when Muḥammad asked for the keys of the treasury, he was told by one of those present to leave them with the council as they could take care of them on their own.[108] This interpretation makes it possible to see the reaction of the council members as a challenge to Muḥammad. Possibly, due to this Ḥusayn remained in the council – this can be seen as an indication that a faction of the council did not want Muḥammad to be the next imam, precisely because he had established his control over important institutions of the expanding Qasimid state and was threatening them.[109]

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[107] *Anā [Muḥammad] wa-akhī ʿawnān li-man yaqūm bi-hādhā-l-amr min āl rasūl allāh .... Walā lanā fī dhālika shayʾ.* al-Jurmūzī, 487.

[108] *Thumma ṭalaba [Muḥammad] al-mafātīḥ ʿalā bayt al-māl min al-faqīh al-fāḍil ʿimād al-dīn Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad Ibn Ḥanash wa qāl ḍaʿhā yā sayyidanā ʿinda al-aṣḥāb yanẓurūn li-anfusihim.* al-Jurmūzī, 487.

[109] In addition, Ḥusayn had a stronger scholarly profile than his brother Muḥammad; this could make him a more acceptable candidate. On Ḥusayn's scholarly achievements see Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muhammad al-Shawkānī*, 37–38.

This hypothesis is confirmed by what follows in al-Jurmūzī's narrative and is absent in that of al-Sharafī. Once out of the meeting, Muḥammad returned to his house to mourn the death of his father. This alerted the people of Shahāra to the death of the imam that had been concealed from them and hastened the decision of the council. Curiously, al-Jurmūzī claims that Muḥammad locked himself in his house to mourn, but somehow his privacy did not prevent others from learning about the death of the imam.[110] The mystery in the passage is the *ahl al-buyūt,* "people of the houses", who are clearly not the Ahl al-Bayt, sayyids, but possibly service-men resident in Shahāra, who owed their well-being and careers to the Qasimid family in general and Muḥammad in particular. We can only speculate who the social groups beyond the elite in the *shūrā* might have been and how these forces in the early Qasimid state could help an ambitious son of the imam to rise to power. Neither al-Jurmūzī nor al-Sharafī provide details on this matter but, considering al-Jurmūzī's description of the council's meeting, it appears that Muḥammad could count on the support of the army and the bureaucrats, for example, those working in the treasury or receiving payments from it.

Taking this analysis into consideration, it seems that the second Qasimid imam came to power at least to some extent in conflict with the 'old guard' of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim. The fact that a strongly positioned son of the imam found it necessary to threaten members of the elite might indicate that he saw them as a potential obstacle in his rise to power or that he was seeking ways to introduce his own supporters into elite circles. The support of the military and administrative class that Muḥammad probably commanded allowed him to play this risky political game, in

[110] *Thumma kharaja [Muḥammad] ʿanhum wa dakhala manzilahu wa aghlaqa ʿalā nafsihi thumma ajhasha bākiyan wa-kān* ahl al-buyūt (emphasis added) *lā ʿilm lahum bi-wafāt al-imām .. lā yaʿrif* ahl al-buyūt (emphasis added) *qabla an yubrimū amr al-khalīfa fa-lammā samiʿ ahl baytihi bukāʾahu ʿarafū wafāt al-imām … fa-samiʿa al-fuḍalāʾ fa-ihtammū bi-tamām al-shūrā.* al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 487.

which he had to both rein in the old elites and not scare them off, since without their support his state could not continue to exist.

Maintaining networks of power: family and allies

Imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad faced several issues at the start of his imamate. The last year of his father's rule was marked by a severe drought and famine in the eastern regions;[111] and in the meantime some were losing faith in the Qasimid project and were turning towards another candidate for the imamate, Nāṣir b. Muḥammad al-Ghurbānī, a former Qasimid ally and a relative of imam al-Muʾayyad through his maternal line.[112] But above all, at the heart of imam al-Muʾayyad's politics was his relationship with his paternal relatives, especially his powerful brothers. Being a weak imam from the point of view of the classical imamate theory he needed their internal, family alliances to be strong. While the Ottoman governors Muḥammad Rāghib Pasha and Aḥmed Faḍlī (Faḍlallāh) Pasha continued to uphold the peace treaty, imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad was able to direct his efforts towards setting up the contours of the Qasimid political system and building these alliances. In these efforts he appears an innovative politician and administrator.

The new imam's priority was to prevent internal strife with his brothers – Ḥusayn, Aḥmad and Ḥasan. All three could potentially challenge his claim to leadership. Ḥusayn, as was shown

[111] Muṭahhar b. Muḥammad al-Jurmūzī, *Bināʾ al-dawla al-qāsimīya fī-l-Yaman fi ʿahd al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad ibn al-Qāsim, 990-1054 / 1582-1644. Maʿa taḥqīq makhṭūṭat al-Jawhara al-munīra fī jumal min ʿuyūn al-sīra (juzʾān) li-l-Muṭahhar ibn Muḥammad al-Jurmūzī. Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, ed. Amat al-Malik Ismāʿīl Qāsim al-Thawr (Ṣanʿāʾ: Muʾassasat al-imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-thaqāfīya, 2008), 375.

[112] Al-Sharafī and al-Jurmūzī are our main sources on the uprising of this sayyid; their narratives should be treated with care due to their proximity to the Qasimid rulers. Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 219b; al-Jurmūzī, vol. 1, pp. 363–65. In addition, in the days of imam al-Muʾayyad a certain sayyid Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Yūsufī from Khawlān Ṣaʿda also claimed the imamate; however, his uprising was dealt with swiftly and he is subsequently listed among the supporters of the imam in al-Jurmūzī's *sīra.* al-Jurmūzī, vol. 1, pp. 324–25.

earlier, was also considered as a candidate for the imamate. Aḥmad, even though a younger brother, was gaining a foothold in Ṣaʿda, a governorship granted to him by his father. Above all, Muḥammad had to negotiate the power balance with Ḥasan, another brother who was imprisoned in Ṣanʿāʾ until 1031/1622 and had a significant amount of social and political capital as the son of the imam who stayed with him during the difficult years of exile in Baraṭ.[113]

To achieve this, the imam used two main tools – intermarriage between different branches and high-ranking appointments for members of the family. These practices were already set in place in the days of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim, who needed to ensure that the descendants of his uncle, ʿĀmir b. ʿAlī, got their fair share. Therefore, imam al-Muʾayyad married his cousin, Nafīsa bint ʿĀmir b. ʿAlī, a marriage that created inviolable obligations for him.[114] This is how we discover the brothers of Nafīsa, ʿAbdallāh and Muḥammad, among the governors of imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad.[115] Ḥasan b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim's son Muḥammad was married to a daughter of imam al-Muʾayyad and a marriage to a daughter of Ḥusayn b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim was also negotiated.[116] The brothers were at work binding themselves into a tightly knit family to prevent internal strife.

But intermarriage alone was not sufficient to prevent family conflicts. With the release of Ḥasan from Ṣanʿāʾ in 1031/1622, imam al-Muʾayyad shifted to applying another powerful method – high-ranking appointments. Aḥmad was at that time running into issues with the Ṣaʿda tribes;

[113] Ḥasan escaped from prison under Aḥmad Faḍlī Pasha in 1031/1622. The escape version is given in al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 239a; Kānī Çelebi, *Bughyat al-khāṭir wa nuzhat al-nāẓir,* NF E.391.ar, f. 141a; and based on a statement of Ḥasan himself in al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, vol. 1, pp. 377–384.; the release version is provided in *Rawḥ al-rūḥ* and is dubious. *Rawḥ al-Rūḥ,* vol. 3, NF D.553.ar, f. 182a.
[114] al-Jurmūzī, vol. 3, p. 1237.
[115] al-Jurmūzī, vol. 1, p. 358.
[116] al-Jurmūzī, vol. 3, pp. 815, 1071.

therefore, the imam was able to offset Aḥmad's growing influence by appointing Ḥasan as the governor of the region. At the same time, the imam needed to give Ḥasan, a talented military commander and respected figure among supporters of the Zaydi imamate, his due share of power. This is how in 1032/1623, Ḥasan was appointed to the Ṣaʿda territories as *wālī*. This relationship was recorded in a unique agreement, a *ʿahd* (discussed below).[117] Similar treaties were concluded with other brothers.[118] As a result, in the second generation of the Qasimid dynasty, a balance of power was designed. Subsequent dynastic transitions of power usually entailed the ascent of a member of one of the subgroups of the Qasimids, most often from the Ḥasanid line.

A traditional tool for maintaining networks with elites outside the family circle used by Zaydi imams was marriage. However, the marriages of imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad, organized by his father, left him little room to create new alliances. Al-Jurmūzī mentions that he only had three wives – Nafīsa, discussed above, sharīfa Taqīya of the al-Sharafī family, and Fāṭima bint al-shaykh Ṣāliḥ b. ʿIwāḍ al-Muḥammadī from Baraṭ, possibly the widow of ʿAlī b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim.[119] It is unclear, why Muḥammad did not use marriage as a political tool, but his brothers, Ḥasan, who married into the Sharaf al-Dīn family, and Aḥmad, who married into the Yāfiʿ confederation, the new southern allies of the Qasimids, both did so.[120] This approach to

[117] al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar ff. 236b-238a; al-Jurmūzī, vol. 2, pp. 427–433.
[118] With ʿAlī b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim (in 1035/1626) see al-Jurmūzī, vol. 2, p. 472. With Ḥusayn b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim see al-Jurmūzī, vol. 3, p. 1073.
[119] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, vol. 3, p. 1237. The marriage of ʿAlī to one of the tribal shaykhs of Dhū Muḥammad in Baraṭ organized by imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim was discussed earlier in this chapter; ʿAlī died in 1023.
[120] Ḥasan married the daughter of ʿAbd al-Rabb, the ruler of Kawkabān from Āl Shams al-Dīn, in 1036, when the fort was surrendered to Qasimid forces. His son Aḥmad b. Ḥasan married Ḥurrīya bint Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. Ḥamīd al-Dīn b. Muṭahhar b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, i.e. a member of the Āl Muṭahhar branch of the Sharaf al-Dīn family, thus strengthening the connection between the two families. Aḥmad b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim fostered relations with the southern Yāfiʿ confederation, through both patronage and marriage, according to al-Jurmūzī. al-Jurmūzī, vol. 2, pp. 579; 3, 1137. al-Jurmūzī, vol. 3, p. 1137.

maintaining networks built on the idea that marriage to any member of the Qasimid family was of equal value and provided access to the upper levels of power. This was an innovation in comparison to the Sharaf al-Dīn system in which the burden of maintaining social networks lay on the imam alone and it both stemmed from and reinforced the new balance of power between the imam and his brothers.

In addition to dealing with his relatives, imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad, like his father, had a circle of supporters that included sayyids, scholars and tribal shaykhs. Once again, al-Jurmūzī generously provides a list of those whom he saw as the crème de la crème of the political elite in the days of the imam.[121] While his list appears repetitive in structure, with once again two classes (*ṭabaqa*) and two estates, the sayyids and the scholars, the historian adds to his list a new section that we do not find in the list in *al-Nubdha,* imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim's biography. This last section is dedicated to the administrators (*ʿummāl*) of the Qasimid state under imam al-Muʾayyad and its presence in the biography speaks to the transformation of the state itself. But before we get to the discussion of this last part of the list, let us analyze the shifts that can be traced in the social composition of the political elite, as visible in this source.

There are 177 people in this list, a significant increase from the 105 in the list in the *sīra* of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim. The proportion of sayyids has increased – in *al-Nubdha* they constituted 38% of the list (40 out of 105), in *al-Jawhara* they constitute 44% (77 out of 177). This increase derives from several sources. First, the families that were already supporting imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim and continued to support imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad strengthened their ranks: the Jaḥḥāf family that provided two wives of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim is one of the three best

[121] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, vol. 1, pp. 305–363. The data that is discussed further can be found in the appendix.

represented families on the list with nine family members, alongside the al-Sharafī family (also married into the Qasimid family) with six family members, and the Qasimid family themselves with fourteen family members on the list. Another source of expansion was the new alliance with leading sayyid families – the Āl al-Muʾayyad, who were only reluctant add-ons to the list in *al-Nubdha,* but now counted seven family members, and the Luqmān and Sharaf al-Dīn families. This steady expansion of sayyid representation on the list indicates that the Qasimids in the time of imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad successfully provided for their 'old' supporters and at the same time became attractive allies for the previously Ottoman-aligned sayyid clans.

However, the most dramatic shift happens in the non-sayyid scholars' section of the list. While the proportion of scholars to sayyids decreased a bit in comparison to *al-Nubdha,* scholars made important advances in the elite ranks. While the number of sayyid families increased from eight to twelve, the number of scholarly clans increased almost twofold, from seventeen to twenty-nine. The scholarly families that started forming their identities in the time of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim entrenched their presence in the upper ranks of the Qasimid elite. Many of these scholarly families continued to dominate the intellectual and political landscape of Qasimid Yemen in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This becomes particularly visible when data from manuscript ownership and patronage statements is considered. The libraries of the Ibn Abī al-Rijāl,[122]

[122] The Ibn Abī al-Rijāl library that I was able to piece together at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana at various points in time included at least 48 manuscripts, among them NF E.90.ar, a manuscript produced under the patronage of Muḥammad b. al-Hādī Ibn Abī al-Rijāl in 1040/1631 (statement on f. 254a). This member of the Ibn Abī al-Rijāl family appears on al-Jurmūzī's list of supporters of imam al-Muʾayyad.

Akwaʿ,[123] Salāmī,[124] and Habal[125] families, for example, attest to the new status that these families gained in the Qasimid period. Some of the earliest surviving ownership and patronage statements of these scholarly families correspond to the time of imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad.[126] Later Qasimid biographical dictionaries, such as *Ṭīb al-samar, Nafaḥāt al-ʿanbar, Ṭabaqāt al-zaydīya al-kubrā, Itḥāf al-aḥbāb,* and *Nashr al-ʿarf* list numerous members of these scholarly families.[127] This confirms that the initial impulse given to these families allowed their descendants to maintain and expand their presence in the Qasimid elites in the next two centuries.

Imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad sought to find a balance between empowering members of his own family and allying with sayyid clans by expanding his reliance on scholars in the administration of the imamate. While scholars are not prominent on the list of *ʿummāl* discussed

[123] I came across 33 manuscripts from the Akwaʿ family library in libraries in Turkey as well as the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, among them NF A.11.ar, produced in 1040/1631 under the patronage of ʿAlī b. ʿIzz al-Dīn b. ʿAlī b. Ṣāliḥ al-Akwaʿ (statement on f. 201a). While this member of the Akwaʿ family is not on al-Jurmūzī's list, his two uncles, Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Ṣāliḥ and Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Ṣāliḥ are there.

[124] ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad al-Salāmī was the patron of NF H.26.ar, produced in 1074/1664 (statement on f. 257a).

[125] An example is NF A.38.ar, produced under the patronage of Aḥmad b. al-Mahdī al-Habal in 1047/1638 (*bi-rasm* statement on f. 312b; his father, al-Mahdī b. Saʿīd al-Habal is on al-Jurmūzī's list). Another example is NF E.446.ar, produced under the patronage of ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Habal in 1031/1632 (*bi-rasm* statement on f. 56a).

[126] See footnotes 120-123 above.

[127] Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Zabāra, *Nubalāʾ al-Yaman bi-qarn al-thānī ʿashar li-l-hijra: al-qism al-thānī min nashr al-ʿarf li-nubalāʿ al-Yaman baʿd al-alf ilā sanat 1375 hijrīya*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Ṣanʿāʾ: Markaz al-dirāsāt wa-l-buḥūth al-Yamanī, 1985); Ibrāhīm b. al-Qāsim al-Shahārī, *Ṭabaqāt al-zaydīya al-kubrā. al-Qism al-thālith. Wa-yusammā bulūgh al-murād ilā maʿrifat al-asnād*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām b. ʿAbbās al-Wajīh, 3 vols. (Amman: Muʾassasat al-imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-thaqāfīya, 2001); Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Kawkabānī, *Ṭīb al-samar fī awqāt al-saḥar*, ed. ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad al-Ḥibshī, 2 vols. (Abu Dhabi: al-Majmaʿ al-thaqāfī, 2002); Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥūthī, *Nafaḥāt al-ʿanbar fī tarājim aʿyān wa-fuḍalāʾ al-Yaman fī al-qarn al-thānī ʿashar*, ed. ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī, 3 vols. (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-tārīkh al-ʿarabī li-l-ṭibāʿah wa-l-nashr wa-l-tawzīʿ, 2008); Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Hādī Ibn Qāṭin, *Itḥāf al-aḥbāb bi-dumyat al-qaṣr al-nāʿita li-maḥāsin baʿḍ ahl al-ʿaṣr*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Muʿallimī (Ṣanʿāʾ: Maktabat al-irshād, 2008).

below, a close reading of their short biographies in the list and other sources reveals that many of them were employed by the state either as 'settled' qāḍis of a single region where their responsibilities ranged from legal matters to taxation, or as 'mobile' administrators who travelled between different locations in Yemen and outside of it.[128] The qāḍīs remained responsible only to the imam; their presence allowed the central administration to counter-balance the ambitions of the sayyids, including members of the Qasimid family. Because of this new symbiosis with the state and the dynasty, scholars gained access to wealth and social capital that had not been available to them before and were able to transfer it to their descendants.

Building a system of checks and balances

The list of the *ʿummāl* that al-Jurmūzī provides in the *sīra* of imam al-Muʾayyad is an innovation that showcases how the administrative structure of the Qasimid state had been transformed since the days of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim.[129] The fact that such a list was introduced into the *sīra* in the first place indicates a growth of administration-consciousness in the Qasimid imamate. It also shows that contemporaries viewed the imamate of al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad as a different state than that of his father; we find no such list of *ʿummāl* of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim in his *sīra* by the same author.

[128] An example of a 'mobile' scholar-administrator is Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ al-Ḥaymī, the famous ambassador of imam al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl to Ethiopia, whose career started in the days of imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad when he was first employed in the administration of Aḥmad b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim and later was an envoy to Yāfiʿ on behalf of the imam, and Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Jamlūlī, who was appointed to the qāḍī-ship of Kawkabān, afterwards was the envoy of imam al-Muʾayyad to Mecca, to the court of sharīf Zayd b. Muḥsin, and in the days of imam al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl was the qāḍī of Mocha. al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, vol. 1, pp. 344, 352; 3, 1138.

[129] al-Jurmūzī, vol. 1, pp. 356–63.

The second Qasimid imam had to ensure the unity of the state; this required a division of power between him and his brothers. This 'cutting up' of the Qasimid imamate into appanages started already in the days of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim, when he appointed his son Aḥmad first as governor to al-Sharaf and then to the Ṣaʿda region.[130] The difficulty for imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad was that he couldn't order his brothers (or their children) around with the same authority as his father. The approach he took to them is described in this last section of al-Jurmūzī's list. This part includes fifteen people, out of whom only three are scholars.[131] Indeed, this section appears a proclamation of sayyid rule in the Muʾayyadī imamate and most importantly it affirms the key roles of the brothers of the imam – Aḥmad, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn – in the Qasimid state. The three brothers are mentioned in the list twice, as supporters of the imam "from before the days of the many conquests and the establishment of the luminous Prophetic state" (*qabla al-futūḥ li-l-bilād al-kathīra wa ẓuhūr al-dawla al-nabawīya al-munīra*) and as "his amīrs after the conquests" (*umarāʾuhu baʿd al-futūḥ*).[132]

The division of power between brothers was first affirmed in the 1032/1623 agreement (*ʿahd*) concluded between imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad and his brother Ḥasan on the occasion of the appointment of Ḥasan to the governorship of Ṣaʿda.[133] The document is framed as a series of recommendations from the imam to his brother and focuses on the organization of

[130] Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, ff. 199a, 221a. This document is also discussed in Tomislav Klarić, "Untersuchungen zur politischen Geschichte der Qāsimidischen Dynastie (11./17. Jh.)" (PhD Dissertation, Göttingen, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, 2007), 249–51. Klarić also provides a general overview of the system of Qasimid family rule throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Klarić, 236–41.
[131] The scholars on the list are Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Salafī, Yaḥyā b. Aḥmad al-Mikhlāfī, and Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Ṣāliḥ al-Akwaʿ. al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, vol. 1, pp. 356–63.
[132] al-Jurmūzī, vol. 1, pp. 356–57, 359–60.
[133] al-Jurmūzī, vol. 2, pp. 427–33.

administration in the lands under Ḥasan's rule. In fact, it is an appointment of a "vice-imam", the second most important person in the state. This is affirmed by the *ʿahd* issued to Ḥusayn b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim in which he is given a similar authority.[134]

Above everything else, imam al-Muʾayyad advised his brother to give special attention to the scholars (*ūlū al-ʿilm* and *ahl al-dīn*) and to rely on them in his administration, ensuring that they were present at his court (*majlis*).[135] This direct discussion of what kind of people the imam expected his brother to introduce into his innermost circle also shows that the imam imposed a division of responsibilities in the territories under the rule of his sibling. Ḥasan was expected to delegate all matters of religion to the specialists. This neutralized his potential claim to the imamate.

In addition to professional literati, the brother of the imam was advised to rely on a bureaucracy of specialists and members of the local elite. Among them the imam mentioned regional or subdivision governors (*wulāt al-aʿmāl),* representatives of the imam (*kufāt al-aʾimma*), trustworthy spokespersons from various groups of the population (*thiqāt al-umma),* members of distinguished old families *(arbāb al-buyūt al-qadīma wa-l-aḥsāb al-karīma).*[136] The attention of the imam to both local elites and his own representatives at the future court of Ḥasan indicates an attempt to build a system of checks and balances. All of this was necessary because Ḥasan's biggest responsibility was the maintenance of the Qasimid professional standing army (*jund*). In

[134] *Yatawallā [Ḥusayn] … mā kān … al-Ḥasan b. amīr al-muʾimīn … yatawallāhu wa yaqūm [Ḥusayn] .. fī maqāmihi [maqam Ḥasan].* al-Jurmūzī, vol. 3, p. 1074.
[135] al-Jurmūzī, vol. 2, p. 428. The imam distinguished between "knowledge-specialists" (*ūlū al-ʿilm*) and "religion-specialists" (*ahl al-dīn*) in his recommendations. This could be an indication that there was a distinction in professions within the scholarly class in this period.
[136] al-Jurmūzī, vol. 2, p. 428.

questions of local administration and taxation that were directly related to this goal, Ḥasan received full authority.[137]

Since a professional standing army required significant financial resources, the document provides insight into the development of taxation in the Qasimid imamate. In addition to *zakāt* the imam instructed his brother to collect *ʿushr* on harvests and a quarter of the *ʿushr* on merchants. These were the standard taxes. On top of that, the imam also introduced extraordinary "assistance" taxes, *maʿāwin,* that were not precisely defined and that were to be collected when the necessity arose.[138] Interestingly, *kharāj,* ubiquitous in Ottoman times, is not mentioned. Instead, the imam stressed the need to collect the extraordinary taxes and delegated the organization of this process to his brother – this accentuation of the need to convince people to pay these extraordinary taxes indicates that this Qasimid innovation often ran into opposition.

Finally, the imam instructed his brother on the appointment and responsibilities of qāḍīs. Qāḍī appointments were outside Ḥasan's power; it seems that he could petition for someone to be appointed, but the final decision belonged to the imam.[139] The presence of judges responsible directly to the imam allowed him to build a system of checks and balances in territories that were otherwise outside his direct control. Of the whole range of the responsibilities of qāḍis, he stressed two: their ability to make decisions on capital punishment, particularly in cases related to revolts, and the need to pass on to them all finance-related cases. The imam clearly saw this last point as

[137] Among the measures that the imam listed was the need to give fair pay to the soldiers based on merit rather than personal connections. al-Jurmūzī, vol. 2, p. 428.
[138] *Al-farāʾiḍ fī-l-māl qismayn qism lā yasquṭ bi-ḥāl maʿa wujūdihi wa huwa ʿushr mā akhrajat al-arḍ wa rubʿ ʿushr mā yataqallab fīhi al-tujjār wa qism yaʾkhudhuhu al-imām fī baʿḍ al-aḥwāl wa huwa hādhihi-l-maʿāwin … faʾinna hādhi-l-maʿāwin yajib ʿalā-l-imām yukthir min akhdhihā ʿinda shiddat al-ḥāja.* al-Jurmūzī, vol. 2, p. 429.
[139] …*ʿalā man yantaṣib qāḍiyan rafaʿtum dhālika ilaynā li-naʾamurakum fīhi bi-ḥukm allāh.* al-Jurmūzī, vol. 2, p. 430.

highly important, he even used the wording "we order" to stress it.[140] This seems to have been urgent for two reasons: first, as an attempt to limit the authority of his brother, who might otherwise have taken care of some criminal cases personally in an equivalent of a *maẓālim* court, and who could have interpreted his financial responsibilities towards the army in an expansive manner, and second, as a continuation of the policy of enforcing a system of checks and balances. By giving more authority and incentives to qāḍīs the imam was strengthening a social group that would support him.

It is particularly interesting to compare the *ʿahd* of imam al-Muʾayyad with the *ʿahd* issued by his father to Aḥmad in 1027/1618. Most themes of the two documents overlap, but there are also significant differences that show how much changed in the five years separating the two documents. In 1027/1618, imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim divided the text of the appointment of his son to Ṣaʿda into three parts: in the first he described the territory that his son would administer and in broad strokes listed his responsibilities, in the second he ordered the people of those regions to obey him, and only in the last section he addressed the expectations of the governor.[141] Unlike imam al-Muʾayyad, imam al-Manṣur expected his son Aḥmad to continue his religious studies; the fact that this could provide him with a qualification for claiming the imamate did not concern him. The question of taxation was mostly dealt with from the point of view of distribution; the imam listed several instances in which Aḥmad was not to distribute the resources under his control. Imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim clearly expected his son to appoint his own judges, and simply gave him advice on who to promote. Finally, imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim spoke of the need to consult others (*lā yatruk al-shūrā fī jamīʿ al-umūr*), but not everyone, only scholars "with the best Arab qualities"

[140] *Wa naʾmuruka an tarudd ʿalā amr al-quḍāh kull mabīʿ bīʿ bi-dūn qīmatihi .. wa kadhā ghalatahu ... wa kadhā al-iqrārāt ....* al-Jurmūzī, vol. 2, pp. 429–30.
[141] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 15–16.

(*lā yakun julasāʾuhu illā ahl al-ʿilm wa-maḥāsin al-ʿarab*), and of the need to provide for the army by sharing the spoils with them.[142]

The two short documents showcase a startling transformation of the Qasimid state – from a camp-like imamate in which sons of the imam were given wide executive powers in page-length documents, and the army was a tribal militia provided for by shares of the spoils of war, into a developed administrative system of checks and balances, in which the powers of governors, even if they were brothers of the imam, were strictly delineated, the army was salaried, and taxation was well-organized.

Similar treaties with Aḥmad and Ḥusayn from the time of imam al-Muʾayyad are mentioned in the sources.[143] These agreements were central to the survival of the Qasimid state as they limited internal family competition and provided a check on the ambitions of the brothers. However, there was a flaw in this system – it only worked, with some exceptions, during the life of the imam who concluded these agreements. The assignment of territories to the brothers created a dangerous precedent for local entrenchment, an issue that became apparent already in the days of al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad.[144] In addition, the transition of power after the death of an imam

[142] al-Jurmūzī, 16. There is no discussion of a regular salary to the army in this document; this shows that it was under al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad that the Qasimid standing army came into being.

[143] A similar appointment letter was issued to ʿAlī b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim (in 1035/1626) on the occasion of a military campaign: see al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, vol. 2, pp. 472–73. The imam issued a *ʿahd* to Ḥusayn b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim in 1048, after the death of Ḥasan: see al-Jurmūzī, vol. 3, pp. 1073–76.

[144] The imam ran into a disagreement with his brother Ḥusayn already in 1040/1631; further conflicts happened with members of Ḥasan's family. al-Thawr, "Tamhīd (Introduction)," 74. In the meantime, Aḥmad b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim effectively formed a local dynasty in Ṣaʿda. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad al-Bahkalī, *Imams, notables et bédouins du Yémen au XVIIIe siècle, ou, Quintessence de l'or du règne de chérif Muḥammad B. Aḥmad*, trans. Michel Tuchscherer, Textes arabes et études islamiques (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 1992), 24–25.

remained a weak spot in the political system; this became visible after imam al-Muʾayyad's death in rajab 1054 / September 1644, when Aḥmad b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim and Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim claimed the imamate alongside Ismāʿīl b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim, the future imam al-Mutawakkil.[145] Zaydi elites put in a lot of effort to ensure the transfer of power to Ismāʿīl (in that sense, al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad's investment in qāḍīs helped his younger brother), and the ambitious relatives were appeased with generous *iqṭāʿ* offers.[146] However, this resolution of the conflict did not eliminate the weakness of the Qasimid administrative system.

One of the main implications of the development of family rule for the Qasimid imamate was the need to find a way to balance centrifugal forces. This balance was found through the administrative apparatus and the judicial system staffed by members of the scholarly class and predominantly responsible to the imam, rather than to the governors.

This apparatus started to develop already in the days of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim. Despite the camp-like character of his imamate in its first years, the conceptual foundation of a Qasimid administration was already present in his days. The early Qasimid administration, however, suffered from displacement and understaffing. In the absence of a capital or a fixed center of decision-making it was impossible to create an effective administration. This is visible even in the simple fact that the biographies of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim cite few letters from the imam; what this could mean is that there was no proper system for archiving them, even for shorter periods that could suffice for a historian or biographer to copy them. Many decisions had to be made on the fly by envoys of the imam who did not have the time to send a missive and wait for a response. The

[145] al-Wazīr, *Ṭabaq al-ḥalwā*, 100.
[146] al-Wazīr, 99, 100–101.

nascent power of the early Qasimid administration is nevertheless visible in an episode that occurred when imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim was leaving besieged Shahāra; among the decisions he made at the time was to supply his appointed right hand man, sayyid Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī al-Jaḥḥāfī, with sheets of paper (*awrāq*) with the name of the imam on it.[147] This practice is highly reminiscent of the way in which Ottoman sultans provided their governors with clear sheets of paper bearing their *tughra* to allow them to issue necessary orders.[148]

The situation changed once Shahāra became the capital of the Qasimid imamate and the southern border with the Ottomans stabilized. The biography of imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad is filled with letters from and to the imam, indicating an expanding bureaucratic apparatus that also provided access to documents for the historians. Some originals of the letters and orders produced in the chancellery of this imam are also preserved.[149] Moreover, even when missives are not

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[147] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 235. *Kataba ismahu al-sharīf fī awrāq wa tarakahā ʿinda … Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī al-Jaḥḥāfī.*

[148] We find further examples of Qasimid imitation of Ottoman chancellery traditions during the reign of imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad. Al-Jurmūzī mentions that letters from imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim to the Ottoman governor Jaʿfer Pasha used a *ʿalāma,* sign, at the top of the page (*fī ṣadr al-kitāb*). Similar signs, usually the regnal name of the imam, could be found on documents issued by the administration of imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad and al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl. This can indicate that the Zaydi Qasimid administration was consciously imitating the style of Ottoman documents to make them recognizable to their Ottoman counterparts. al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, vol. 2, p. 478. Al-Jurmūzī also mentions that in such documents "red dust" (*al-turāb al-aḥmar*) was used; this could refer to the Ottoman practice of sprinkling gold dust on ink used in documents of state importance. The imitation of this practice was common in Arab lands under Ottoman rule; note, for example, the case of Cairene petitions in the seventeenth century: James E. Baldwin, "Petitioning the Sultan in Ottoman Egypt," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 75, no. 3 (August 2, 2012): 518. An example of such use of a *ʿalāma* in the al-Muʾayyad administration is the document preserved in NF F.203.ar (f. 10-bis-a). His *ʿalāma* seems to be also reproduced in the texts of some of his letters, see for example, al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, vol. 3, p. 1148. Imam al-Mutawakkil's *ʿalāma* survives in several documents, for example, NF F.203.ar, f. 205b, and a reproduction of a document (wathīqa raqm 1) in al-Shahārī, *Shahāra fī tārīkh al-Yaman*, 254.

[149] For example, a note from imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad in the hand of the imam's secretary, Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ghurbānī, dated 21 Dhū-l-qaʿda 1031 / 27 September 1622 (NF F.203.ar, f. 11a) shows that the imam's chancellery was swiftly expanding.

mentioned, the fact that the imam remained informed about military activities (see below) taking place simultaneously on several fronts confirms the existence of a developed bureaucratic network.[150] This growth of the professionalism of the imam as an administrator and the expansion of his apparatus is registered in a remarkable quotation from *Bughyat al-mustafīd*, first brought to scholarly attention by Tomislav Klarić, in which the common people suspected that the imam had a gift, or aptitude, from the jinn (*malakat min al-jinn*) due to his extensive knowledge of the affairs of Yemen.[151]

While discussions of Qasimid chancellery practices might appear speculative, biographies of administrators clearly speak to the development of an administrative stratum. Among imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim's administrators Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ghurbānī stands out in particular; according to Ibn Abī al-Rijāl he shaped the Qasimid administration.[152] He then continued to serve imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad and it is from this period that samples of his work survive.[153] The court of al-Muʾayyad attracted qualified scholars to secretarial positions – among them the Miswarī family

[150] An observation made in al-Thawr, "Tamhīd (Introduction)," 56–57.
[151] "He would study about the land and the governors, the people in the markets, the madrasas and on the roads; nothing could be concealed from him to such an extent that he would inform people about their actual situation. So, they would think that he controlled jinn who informed him about that. But in fact, all he did was study and research what was good for the land and the people." (*kān [al-imām al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad] … yabḥath … ʿan al-bilād wa ʿan wulātihā wa ahl al-adrāk wa-l-aswāq wa-l-madāris wa-l-ṭuruqāt fa-lā yakhfā ʿalayhi shayʾ ḥattā annahu … kān yukhbir al-nās bi-ḥaqāʾiq umūrihim fa-yuẓann annahu … lahu malakat min al-jinn tu-khbiruhu wa mā dhāka illā la-mā kān ʿalayhi min al-baḥth wa-l-iṭṭilāʿ ʿalā mā yuṣliḥ al-bilād wa-l-ʿibād …).* ʿĀmir b. Muḥammad, *Bughyat al-murīd wa-uns al-farīd,* ZA 275-03, f. 107 (https://elibrary.mara.gov.om/mktbtt-muosstt-aliemam-zed-bn-ale-althqafett/mktbtt-muosstt-aliemam-zed-bn-ale-althqafett/ktab/?id=11876#book/121, accessed May 19, 2021). Cited in Klarić, "Untersuchungen zur politischen Geschichte der Qāsimidischen Dynastie (11./17. Jh.)," 61 (fn. 169).
[152] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 2, pp. 418–25. His previous experience was at the court of imam al-Nāṣir al-Muʾayyadī.
[153] NF F.203.ar, f. 10-bis-a.

that included ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn, Saʿd al-Dīn b. Ḥusayn and Aḥmad b. Saʿd al-Dīn al-Miswarī,[154] and Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ḥamzī.[155] Qasimid administrators become more visible in the sources, as participants in events, patrons of artistic and manuscript production, and poets – these developments indicate that the prestige of the administrative career track increased in comparison to the pre-Ottoman period.

In addition to the professionalization of the imam and the expansion of his administrative apparatus, parallel developments were taking place in the domains under the control of his brothers. Given the wide responsibilities and the search for modes of accountability discussed above, it was necessary for them to staff their own, local administrations.[156] This, of course, furthered the important role of the scholarly class in the Qasimid imamate. In the development of the Qasimid administration under the first imams we can discern a steady Ottoman influence. The responsibilities of the brothers of the imam in their separate regions, their administrations staffed with scholars who were responsible for tax collection and the provisioning of the military, the whole reorientation of the administration from the figure of the imam towards the professional administrator, all this appears to be at the same time influenced by the necessities of the nascent Qasimid imamate and by Ottoman administrative practice in Yemen.

Military success

Administrative and political developments under imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad went hand in hand with territorial expansion of the Qasimid domain. The imamate under imam al-

[154] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 1, pp. 302–14; al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra*, 62.
[155] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 2, p. 43, fn. 1; 3, pp. 252–53.
[156] Al-Jurmūzī mentions the *ʿummāl* under the command of Ḥasan, Ḥusayn and Aḥmad in this list. al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, vol. 1, pp. 356–363.

Muʾayyad initially enjoyed a period of peace on its southern border. This allowed the imam and his brothers to focus on expansion northwards and westwards. Since 1027/1618 Aḥmad b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim had been heading the governorship of Ṣaʿda. His government, however, was running into issues with the tribes of Khawlān Ṣaʿda and in 1031/1622 imam al-Muʾayyad sent Ḥasan b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim to support Aḥmad.[157] These two brothers then became the main force on this northern front. After quelling resistance in Ṣaʿda the Qasimid forces captured Najrān and secured their northern frontier.

The success of the Qasimid brothers in the northern regions made it possible to reestablish contacts with two other important regions of Arabia – the Ḥijāz and the Tihāma of Yemen. In both areas the Qasimid imam found allies. News of his success against the Ottomans started to attract ambitious men from across South-Western Arabia.[158] Among them was a member of the Abū Numayy clan of the sharīfs of Mecca, Hāshim b. Ḥāzim b. Rājiḥ Ibn Abī Numayy, who arrived in Yemen in 1035/1626, ostensibly to study,[159] but effectively to make a career. He was quickly recognized as an important mediator between the Tihāma and the Zaydi imam. Possibly, his Sunni background made it easier for the population of predominantly Shafīʿī regions, like Wuṣāb, to respond to his call to revolt against the Ottomans on the side of the imam.[160] This sayyid was seen as a valuable ally by the imam, who gave him one of his daughters in marriage and later appointed

[157] Sālim, *al-Fatḥ al-ʿuthmānī al-awwal li-l-Yaman. 1538-1635*, 371. Al-Thawr analyzes the different explanations al-Jurmūzī and al-Sharafī give to this dual appointment; it is possible that both points of view were skewed due to hierarchies of loyalty of the authors. al-Thawr, "Tamhīd (Introduction)," 49.
[158] It is not a coincidence that the list of imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad's supporters includes Shāfiʿī scholars. al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, vol. 1, pp. 354–56.
[159] *Kān [al-sayyid Hāshim b. Ḥāzim Ibn Abī Numayy] kharaja min Makka al-musharrafa li-ṭalab al-ʿilm fī awwal sanat khams wa thalāthīn wa alf.* al-Jurmūzī, vol. 2, p. 558.
[160] al-Jurmūzī, vol. 2, pp. 560, 574.

him to the governorship of Zabīd and the Tihāma.[161] By 1035/1626 they had expanded their control to Jabal Fayfā, challenging Ottoman rule over the Tihāma regions.

A *casus belli* that launched the final push of imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad in the southern direction was the arrest and execution in 1035/1626 of his envoy, a certain faqīh Ḥasan al-ʿUlmānī, who travelled in Khawlān Ṣanʿāʾ and Sanḥān, territories nominally outside Qasimid control, collecting *zakāt* in the name of the imam.[162] The imam, learning about the swift execution of the scholar, wrote to Ḥaydar Pasha requesting blood money (*diya*). This could have been seen as an offense since it disregarded the Ottoman concern that the scholar breached their sovereignty by collecting taxes not for the benefit of the Ottoman administration.[163] It tells much about the state of the Ottoman government in Yemen in 1036/1627 that the Pasha was ready to pay and told the imam as much in his letters.[164] Imam al-Muʾayyad, however, was not interested in peace; he saw an opportunity to conquer the lands under the control of the Āl Sharaf al-Dīn and Ṣanʿāʾ and took it.

In the decade following the second Ottoman-Qasimid treaty, the alliance between the Ottoman governors and the different branches of the Āl Sharaf al-Dīn had weakened. As the resources of the Ottomans diminished, the Sharaf al-Dīns started to lose their territory in al-Sharaf to the

[161] al-Jurmūzī, vol. 1, pp. 328, 361; 3, 992. While the first appointment of this sayyid was confirmed by imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad, his subsequent appointments to the ports (*banādir*) of Tihāma was confirmed by Ḥasan b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim. al-Jurmūzī, vol. 3, p. 1091.
[162] *Rawḥ al-rūḥ* places this event in 1036/1627. *Rawḥ al-rūḥ,* vol. 3, NF D.553.ar, ff. 182b-183a. The episode has been discussed by many scholars, including Amat al-Malik al-Thawr, the editor of al-Jurmūzī's *sīra* of imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad. See al-Shahārī, *Shahāra fī tārīkh al-Yaman*, 108; al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, vol. 1, pp. 44–45.
[163] *Rawḥ al-rūḥ,* vol. 3, NF D.553.ar, f. 183b.
[164] ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh reported as an eyewitness that Ḥaydar Pasha was ready to pay the imam (*qad kān al-bāshā Ḥaydar asʿada (?) ilā taslīm mā arādahu al-imām*). *Rawḥ al-rūḥ,* vol. 3, NF D.553.ar, f. 183b.

Qasimids now that they had to defend it with their own army.[165] The initiative passed to the Qasimids, who were able to establish more effective relationships with the tribes, most probably through their collaboration with local scholars. In the meantime, the Āl Sharaf al-Dīn did not have the resources to support local scholars and to maintain tribal loyalties through them. Under the pressure of tribes switching to the Qasimid side and due to losses in the ranks of the family, the Āl Sharaf al-Dīn surrendered Kawkabān and Thulā to the Qasimid forces in rajab 1036 / April 1627.[166]

The domino-effect of the surrender of the Sharaf al-Dīns of Kawkabān additionally underlines their importance to the structure of Ottoman rule in the region. With this ally taken out of the picture, the Ottomans did not stand a chance. Other members of the pro-Ottoman elite closely followed the Sharaf al-Dīns; the Āl al-Ḥamza established their own alliance with the Qasimids shortly after the surrender of Kawkabān.[167] Some Ottoman officers switched sides at this moment as well. Most prominent among them was amīr Sunbul, an Ottoman officer based in Dhamār, who, according to al-Jurmūzī, had wide-ranging powers.[168] Shortly after the surrender of Kawkabān he

[165] *Rawḥ al-rūḥ,* vol. 3, NF D.553.ar, ff. 185a-186a. The Sharaf al-Dīns of Kawkabān, seeing the limits of their own military forces, considered remaining in Kawkabān and only going out for short daily attacks.

[166] The tribes of Ṭawīla, Jabal Tays and Ḥayma joined the Qasimid side; shortly thereafter, the Banū Khayyāṭ also rose against the Āl Sharaf al-Dīn. The reason that the chronicler gives for it is that the roads between Ṣanʿāʾ and Aden were cut and there was a shortage of provisions for the Ottoman army, which resulted in an increase of the tax burden on the tribes. *Rawḥ al-rūḥ,* vol. 3, NF D.553.ar, ff. 187a, 188b, 189b-190a. On losses in the Sharaf al-Dīn family and their officer corps see *Rawḥ al-rūḥ,* vol. 3, NF D.553.ar, ff. 187b, 189a, 192a.

[167] One additional reason why the Āl al-Ḥamza joined the imam at this juncture could be that they, unlike the Āl Shams al-Dīn of Kawkabān, surrendered their territorial claims during the Ottoman period; the Qasimid uprising found them holding appointments in Lower Yemen, for example, Yarīm. With the supply lines and decision making system in Ottoman Yemen in crisis, they had no support base to resist the Qasimids. al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, vol. 2, pp. 585, 587.

[168] Al-Jurmūzī claims that the governor provided amīr Sunbul with clear sheets of paper to issue any kind of orders that he might find necessary and permitted him to mint his own coins. al-Jurmūzī, vol. 2, p. 583.

decided to join the Zaydi side and Ḥasan b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim specifically.[169] Amīr Sunbul was reaffirmed in his position as governor of Dhamār and his main contribution to the Qasimid success was his campaigns in al-Ḥujayrīya, the region between Aden and Taʿizz, and the Tihāma.[170] In rajab 1038 / March 1629, Ḥaydar Pasha surrendered Ṣanʿāʾ after a devastating two-year long siege. [171]

Subsequent events exacerbated the already difficult position of the Ottomans. The governor of Ethiopia (*bilād Ḥabasha*), ʿĀbidīn Pasha, who was expected to help Ḥaydar Pasha in his war against the Qasimids, pursued his own interests and arrested the governor.[172] To the remaining Ottoman officer corps this indicated that they too were free to choose a side, and some of those who supported Ḥaydar Pasha decided to join the Zaydis.[173] The disunity in Ottoman ranks made it easier for the Qasimids to besiege and capture Taʿizz in muḥarram 1038 / September 1628.[174] Due to the same disunity in Ottoman ranks, the Ottoman allies in Laḥij and Aden switched sides and an Ottoman military detachment under the command of rajab Aghā, sent from Egypt to quell the Zaydi uprising, joined imam al-Muʾayyad's forces shortly after their arrival in Yemen.[175]

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[169] In 1039/1630, amīr Sunbul shifted loyalties to another member of the Qasimid family, Ḥusayn b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim. Al-Muʾayyadī, *al-Tuḥfa al-ʿanbarīya,* NF D.451.ar, ff. 12b, 19b; al-Shahārī, *Shahāra fī tārīkh al-Yaman*, 108; al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, vol. 2, p. 584.
[170] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, vol. 2, pp. 620, 640.
[171] *Rawḥ al-rūḥ,* vol. 3, NF D.553.ar, f. 202a.
[172] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, vol. 2, pp. 703–705. According to al-Jurmūzī, the two pashas disagreed over the control of the treasury of Mocha. See also Sālim's description of the conflict, based on a different selection of sources, including the Ottoman *Tārīkh-i Naʿīmā*: Sālim, *al-Fatḥ al-ʿuthmānī al-awwal li-l-Yaman. 1538-1635*, 382–83.
[173] al-Thawr, "Tamhīd (Introduction)," 110–11; al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, 734.
[174] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, vol. 2, pp. 648–51.
[175] al-Thawr, "Tamhīd (Introduction)," 105–6; al-Shahārī, *Shahāra fī tārīkh al-Yaman*, 109; al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, vol. 2, pp. 734–42.

Despite these impressive successes, the campaign of imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad was running into local resistance in Lower Yemen. To create new alliances, the imam could not rely on force alone; it is possibly for this reason that the brother of the imam, Aḥmad, married into the Yāfiʿ tribal confederation, while another high-ranking sayyid supporter of the imam, al-Hādī b. ʿAlī al-Shāmī, married into a banū Juban shaykhly family.[176] Family connections of Qasimid supporters with local tribes were valued; when Ḥasan b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim was looking for allies in Laḥj, he chose to support a member of a local shaykhly family who was related through his mother to another ally of the Qasimids.[177] These policies allowed the Qasimids to develop connections to a sufficient support base to overthrow the Ottomans.

The final act of the Ottoman-Qasimid conflict is the expedition of Aḥmad Qāniṣawh Pasha in 1039/1629. By then, Ottoman forces were pushed out of the northern highlands all the way to Tihāma; they were also cut off from Aden. Despite the large force under Aḥmad Qāniṣawh's command, he was unable to secure a foothold in Yemen, not least due to actions that alienated the Tihāma elites and challenged the loyalty of his Ottoman soldiers.[178] After several years of military activity interspersed with truces, the Ottomans were definitively evicted out of Yemen. After this failed expedition, the Qasimids were left without serious enemies in their corner of Arabia. The territory of the imamate stabilized and the efforts of the third Qasimid imam turned inwards, towards the development of the administrative tendencies that we have discussed in this chapter.

[176] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, vol. 2, p. 808; vol. 3, p. 1137.
[177] al-Jurmūzī, vol. 2, p. 810.
[178] Sālim, *al-Fatḥ al-ʿuthmānī al-awwal li-l-Yaman. 1538-1635*, 384–86.

Conclusion

In summarizing the legacy of the first decades of the Qasimid imamate, one is struck by the difference between it and the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate in terms of their origins. This is an imamate built by outsiders, a sayyid clan that was not as well connected as the Sharaf al-Dīns when they started their ascent to power. The main strength of the Qasimid imams was their ability to forge a new elite, that of local scholars with strong tribal connections and middling sayyids who, like the Qasimids themselves, did not become partners in the Ottoman political project. The Qasimids were lucky to be able to leverage the power transitions of the Ottoman governors for their own benefit. Like the Sharaf al-Dīns in the tenth / sixteenth century, they benefited from weaknesses in the political system of an opposing regime.

Even though the Qasimid imamate rose to power as an outsider, with the help of marginal groups, for its long-term survival alliances with the 'old elites' were necessary. Therefore, Qasimid imams sought ways to accommodate the 'old elites' through partnerships, appointments and marriage. What supported this project was the special status of the brothers of the imam in the political system as co-rulers and high-ranking officials. Unlike in the Sharaf al-Dīn period, contacts and partnerships with relatives of the imam turned out to be beneficial for the families who chose this route.

The system that imam al-Muʾayyad put in place elevated the status of members of the family of the imam. Already in his time this caused some confusion, since his brother Ḥasan, effectively the second person in the imamate, was often referred to as a *malik,* king, and established what can be considered his personal capital in Ḍūrān Ānis.[179] Even though the brothers of the

[179] ZA 020-04, im 003, https://elibrary.mara.gov.om/libraries/03-imam-zaid-bin-ali-cultural-foundation-library/manuscripts/ZA_020/ZA_020-04/003.jpg accessed April 6, 2021. See also a discussion in al-Thawr, "Tamhīd (Introduction)," 85. The title of king, *malik,* also appears in the

imam were accorded equal status, it was clear to many observers (and to the brothers themselves) that Ḥasan stood out among them. This created a potential for future conflicts between different branches of the family. Attempts were made, both by the family itself and by scholars close to them, to come up with regulations to avert such conflict.[180] The special status of Ḥasan was transferred to his descendants despite imam al-Muʾayyad's attempt to prevent dynastic formation in that family branch through the appointment of Ḥusayn, his other brother, to the position of "vice-imam." The sons of Ḥasan, Aḥmad and Muḥammad defied the decisions of imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad on multiple occasions, and eventually their descendants came to power as imams.[181]

This chapter charted the formation of a new Zaydi imamate in conditions of war and in confrontation with a powerful enemy, the Ottoman Empire. Many of the decisions of the imams, including their trajectories of military expansion, their inclusion of family members in the administration, their alliances, and their readiness to coopt groups previously loyal to the Ottomans were dictated by this situation. The task of maintaining and developing this new imamate fell to the third imam of the Qasimid dynasty, al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl (ruled 1054-1087/1644-1676). His three-decade-long rule can be considered the golden age of the Qasimid political project as it had been

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inscriptions in Ḥasan's tomb and mosque in Ḍūrān. Ḥasan's success in building up Ḍūrān made it an attractive location for the capital of the imamate; under imam al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl the capital was moved there from Shahāra. Bruce Paluck and Rayya Saggar, *The Al-Ḥasan bin al-Qāsim Mosque Complex: An Architectural and Historical Overview of a Seventeenth Century Mosque in Ḍūrān, Yemen // Jāmiʿ al-Ḥasan bin al-Qāsim fī Ḍūrān: dirāsa tārīkhīya wa miʿmārīya li-jāmiʿ yamanī min al-qarn al-sābiʿ ʿashar mīlādī* (Ṣanʿāʾ: The American Institute for Yemeni Studies and Le Centre Français d'Archéologie et de Sciences Sociales de Sanaa, 2002), 6, 23–24, 29–30.

[180] Al-Thawr is, to my knowledge, the first researcher to point out attempts of scholars to intervene in questions of division of power between members of the Qasimid family. al-Thawr, "Tamhīd (Introduction)," 89–90. She discusses a letter of sayyid Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ghashm to the four elder brothers (Muḥammad, Aḥmad, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn); the edition of this letter can be found in al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, vol. 3, pp. 825–35.

[181] al-Thawr, "Tamhīd (Introduction)," 93–99.

shaped by imams al-Manṣūr Qāsim and al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad. As such it deserves separate treatment and thus lies outside the scope of this chapter.

Part 2. Political elites in early modern Zaydi Yemen

In 1006/1597, writes the historian al-Sharafī, negotiations took place between the imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim and amīr ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, an Ottoman ally and the ruler of the region of Ḥajja. To secure the truce (*ṣulḥ*), the imam sent a delegation consisting of three groups (*ṭāʾifas*): *al-sāda, al-fuqahāʾ* and *mashāyikh*, i.e. descendants of the Prophet, the scholarly class, and shaykhs of the tribes.[1] Each *ṭāʾifa* was led by a *raʾīs*, the head of the group.[2] These three *ṭāʾifa*s were not new constructs, and were foundational to the existence of any state in Yemen in the pre-modern period since the success of any political project in the region depended on the capability of the leaders to negotiate with these elites.

This part of the dissertation explores how the development of state institutions discussed in part 1 affected the social history of sayyids (chapter 4) and scholars (chapter 5). It explores the shifts in the balance between these two groups and their changing internal hierarchies as a response to the development of the Zaydi state and the Ottoman administration in Yemen in the early modern period.

[1] Lane suggests translating *ṭāʾifa* as a distinct division (he offers *firqa* as an equivalent term) of men. The term is fluid and can be used to designate a group that shares a religion, an occupation (and is therefore a guild), or comes from a particular locality. It is used in Sufism to denote a community of believers. (Geoffroy, E., "Ṭāʾifa," in *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2012). The term is also used to designate the regional kingdoms of pre-Islamic Near East after Alexander the Great's conquests, *mulūk al-ṭawāʾif*, and as a term for the principalities or political factions/dynasties, of Muslim Spain that appear after the decline of the Umayyad Cordovan caliphate and continue to re-emerge after the Almoravid and Almohad conquests. (Morony, M. and Wasserstein, D.J., "Mulūk al-Ṭawāʾif," in *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2012; for *ṭāʾifa*s as political factions see Anthony Minnema, "A Ṭāʾifa in Exile: Sayf al-Dawla and the Survival of the Banū Hūd," Al-Masāq 31, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 1–19).

[2] al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 141a.

Chapter 4. The Zaydi *ashrāf* and state transformations in Yemen in the ninth – eleventh centuries AH / fifteenth – seventeenth centuries CE

Introduction

In January 1629 / jumādā al-thānī 1038, ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh, the great-grandson of the last pre-Ottoman imam of Yemen al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, was present at a meeting with the Ottoman governor at the time, Ḥaydar Pasha. Things were not going well for the Ottomans; the sons of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim were attacking southern cities, and that month their forces reached the port of Mukhā, threatening Ottoman maritime communications in the Red Sea region. The Pasha was frustrated and told his closest advisors that he believed all the troubles of the Ottomans in Yemen stemmed from the *ashrāf.* If the Ottomans regained control over Yemen, the Pasha's plan was to send all the *ashrāf* off to the island of Kamarān to prevent any further strife (*fitan*). After some consideration, the Pasha promised to keep two sayyids by his side – Ṣalāḥ b. ʿAbdallāh al-Sirājī al-Ḥāḍirī and ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh.[1] This episode showcases some of the main questions that will be explored in this chapter: who the *ashrāf* the governor spoke about were; why the only solution the Ottoman governor could see was to send them into exile (but not to execute them); why they were causing strife (*fitan*) from the Ottoman point of view; where their social power came from; and why some members of this group were not as bad as the others in the eyes of the governor.

[1] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-Rūḥ*, vol. 3, NF D.553.ar, f. 202a.

In this chapter I discuss the role of the descendants of the Prophet in the Yemeni Zaydi state and society.[2] I will first analyze the structure of sayyid clans in the pre-modern period with a focus on the internal hierarchy of a pre-modern sayyid family, the ways in which sayyids ensured the intergenerational transfer of power, and the role of marriage in the consolidation of the clans. I will then argue that the *ashrāf* as *ahl al-riyāsa* were central to the functioning of the state in the region, but within the Zaydi model of statehood they were also the prime reason for the instability of the political system. The Ottoman period became a time of experiment in the sayyid-state relationship, as the Ottomans sought ways to control and appease the sayyids through appointment and official recognition of some of their territorial claims. The Ottoman intervention shifted the balance across the Zaydi elites and created an opportunity for the nascent Qasimid imamate to restore a Zaydi state without fearing competition from other descendants of the Prophet.

The structure of a sayyid family

Who is considered part of a Zaydi sayyid clan? In the strictest sense, membership of the clan was defined through the male line, and the status was passed from father to son. This fact has a visual representation in the manuscripts of the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* where the names of men and only of some women of the family are marked in a larger script as section titles. However, a close

[2] Zaydi texts refer to them both as *ashrāf,* (sing. m. *sharīf,* sing. f. *sharīfa*) and sayyids or *sāda* (sing. m. *sayyid,* sing. f. *sayyida*). In theological works they are referred to as Ahl al-Bayt, "people of the House" i.e. the House of the Prophet Muḥammad. Johann Heiss argues that the term *sayyid* in the Yemeni context was initially used to denote tribal elites. He also postulates a distinction in function between *sharīfa*s and *sayyida*s. Johann Heiss, "Ein shaykh ist ein shaykh, aber was für ein Ding ist ein Sayyid?," in *Veränderung und Stabilität: Normen und Werte in islamischen Gesellschaften*, ed. Johann Heiss (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2005), 121–36.

reading of the history of the Banū al-Wazīr shows that a great deal of ambiguity was allowed in the definition of family membership.

First, even the strict patrilineage could be disputed. Masʿūd, the son of a slave-woman, claimed that he was the son of Aḥmad b. Muṭahhar b. Aḥmad b. Mufaḍḍal.[3] His claim was considered baseless by some members of the family, but others agreed with it. In the end, Masʿūd was given the family name al-Wazīr, his sayyid genealogy was confirmed (*al-dukhūl fī nasab al-ashrāf*) and he was allowed to "dress his children in the clothes of the *ashrāf*" (*labbasa awlādahu libās al-shurafāʾ*) and to take wives from the *ashrāf* families and have his children marry into them (*ankaḥūhu wa nakaḥū ilayhi*).[4] Even his most forceful critics could not entirely exclude him from the family narrative. Thus, the compilers of the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* mention him in the text, though showing their doubt about his ancestry.[5]

Secondly, the authors of the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* often chose to make the biographies of people from outside the Banū al-Wazīr known to the reader implying their importance to the history of the family as a whole. Thus, the Banū al-Wazīr, if one judges by the people mentioned in

[3] Little is known about Aḥmad b. Muṭahhar b. Aḥmad b. Mufaḍḍal. He is described as a *fāris baṭal*, which implies that he was a knight, a military leader and a man of valor. He was a supporter of imam al-Manṣūr ʿAlī b. al-imām al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ and lived in the eight century AH / fourteenth century CE. Aside from Masʿūd, he had only one other son called Idrīs who died in a horse accident. *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, f. 54b. The authors of *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* claimed that in fact the father of Masʿūd was a musician (*muzayyin). Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr*, NF C.35.ar, f. 55a.

[4] *Nakaḥa ilā* is not a common usage. Al-Qurṭubī (d. 520/1126) offers in *al-Bayān wa-l-Taḥṣīl* a form that relates to this case: *al-rajul idhā nakaḥa ilā man huwa ashraf minhu tasharrafa bihim* – a man who gives his daughters in marriage to those who are more noble than he becomes more noble himself. Abū al-Walīd b. Rashid al-Qurṭubī, *al-Bayān wa-l-taḥṣīl wa-l-sharḥ wa-l-tawjīh wa-l-taʿlīl fī masāʾil al-mustakhraja*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥajjī, 2nd ed., vol. 18 (Beirut: Dār al-gharb al-islāmī, 1988), 581.

[5] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, f. 55a.

the family history, included not only blood relatives.[6] Relatives of the in-laws became part of the family, both men and women, especially if they were prominent people in society. Aside from the scholars who married into the Banū al-Wazīr or who taught members of the family, one group can be broadly defined as "statesmen" (*ahl al-riyāsa*), people bearing the title *amīr*. The *ahl al-riyāsa* most probably included tribal leaders, though sources avoid explicitly stating this. Yet another group included merchants and city notables; an example is Ḥasan b. Jābir b. Ḥajjāj, a rich man (*rajul min al-tharwa wa-l-māl*) and owner of a *funduq* in Ṣaʿda whose daughter married a member of the Banū al-Wazīr family.[7] For this last category of people from outside the Banī al-Wazīr peer-circle, particularly merchants, it was preferable to establish a link to more noble occupations. The author of the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* therefore, made sure to introduce into the history the brother of the *funduq*-owner, Yaḥyā b. Jābir b. Ḥajjāj al-Ṣaʿdī al-Naṣrī, who was characterized as a scholar, *faqīh* and author of a legal work supposedly entitled *Sharḥ al-tadhkira*.[8] Thus, a sayyid family in its broadest sense was a network that connected sayyids to other people who mattered in Yemeni society – scholars, tribal leaders, other sayyids.

The reasons for this generous flexibility were social links that enhanced the power and prestige of the family. The above mentioned *funduq*-owner's family held strong positions in Ṣaʿda, and provided the sayyid clan with valuable links to the local tribes, the Banū Badr and the Banū

[6] It is possible that this flexibility is built into the title of the work itself; *banū* is a term that is often used in the names of tribes; a tribe has more flexible membership terms than a family.
[7] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr*, NF C.35.ar, f. 27b.
[8] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr*, NF C.35.ar, f. 27b. This scholar was a friend (*zamīl*) of sayyid ʿAbdallāh b. al-Hādī b. Ibrāhīm b. ʿAlī b. al-Murtaḍā (d. 840/1436), a poet and *adīb*. I have not been able to find any other biographies of Yaḥyā b. Jābir. A person of that name appears as the owner and copyist of NF E.208.ar, however, his statements are dated 620/1223 which would place him two centuries prior to the events in which he supposedly participated. The *sharḥ al-Tadhkira* that he supposedly wrote most probably refers to a commentary on *al-Tadhkira al-fākhira fī fiqh al-ʿitra al-ṭāhira* by Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Madhḥijī (d. 791/1389).

ʿAlwān.[9] Another example can be found in the biographical notice on ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Wazīr (d. 840/1436).[10] The author writes about his wife, a *sharīfa* from the clan of imam al-Nāṣir Abū-l-Fatḥ b. al-Ḥusayn al-Daylamī (d. 444/1052-3) who were residents of al-Ṭawīla.[11] This marriage allowed the Banū al-Wazīr to claim the prestige associated with a long deceased imam and his lineage as well as to claim special status in the town of al-Ṭawīla, a fast-growing city in the late medieval and early modern period.[12] It is through marriages like these that sayyid clans were able to form tightly knit communities that merged the interests of sayyids, scholars and tribes, and allowed the sayyids to hold the special status in local organization that was so difficult for later centralizing governments to overcome.

Having discussed the inclusion of people into the family, the next thing to consider is exclusion. Few occurrences could lead to the cutting of ties; family support was strong and expansive. However, some things were unforgivable. One of them was an accusation of murder. In one case,

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[9] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr* NF D.556.ar f. 60b. The Banū ʿAlwān are most probably the Bedouin, nomadic, tribe residing south of Ṣaʿda. Ibrāhīm Aḥmad al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam al-buldān wa-l-qabāʾil al-yamanīya* (Ṣanʿāʾ / Beirut: Dār al-kalima li-l-ṭibāʿa wa-l-nashr wa-l-tawzīʿ / al-Muʾassasa al-jāmiʿīya li-l-dirāsāt wa-l-nashr wa-l-tawzīʿ, 2002), vol. 2, p. 1108. The Banū Badr seem to be harder to identify. Of the families and groups with that name that al-Maqḥafī lists, only the Āl Badr reside in the vicinity of Ṣaʿda, however, they claim sayyid status and descent from Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim al-Rassī. al-Maqḥafī, vol. 1, p. 144.

[10] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, f. 36a. He is the son of the famous Zaydi scholar Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Wazīr (d. 840/1436). A detailed study of his biography with special focus on his intellectual achievements can be found in Damaris Wilmers, *Beyond Schools: Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Wazīr's (d. 840/1436) Epistemology of Ambiguity*, Islamic History and Civilization (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2018), 15–44. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm and his son ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad died in the plague of 840/1436.

[11] Imam al-Nāṣir li dīn allāh Abū-l-Fatḥ al-Ḥusayn b. Nāṣir al-Daylamī (d. 444/1052-3) claimed the imamate in Yemen in 429/1038, however his attempt to rise to power was curbed by the Ṣulayḥid expansion. W. Madelung, "Abu 'l-Fatḥ al-Daylamī," in *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2012.

[12] On the growth of al-Ṭawīla: see Robert T.O. Wilson, *Gazetteer of Historical North-West Yemen*, Arabistische Texte und Studien 3 (Hildesheim / Zürich / New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1989), 223–24.

when there was a suspicion that a sayyid, Ibrāhīm b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad (d. 803/1400-1401), was involved in the poisoning of several people, it resulted in divorce.[13] The concern came mostly from his wife, a daughter of an imam, *sharīfa* Fāṭima bint al-imām al-Mahdī ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī, who was not without political ambitions herself. She nevertheless did not want to definitively cut her ties with the Banū al-Wazīr, so her second marriage was to the brother of her first husband. Another unforgivable act was treachery, but only when it involved a shift from local loyalties to alliance with complete outsiders (southern Yemeni non-Zaydi dynasties were not considered such outsiders and stories of travels of members of the sayyid clans down south abound in the family history). An interesting case to illustrate this is an episode from the biography of sayyid ʿAbdallāh b. Yaḥyā b. Ṣalāh Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil who lived in the tenth/sixteenth century.[14] He had a turbulent political career, first supporting imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, then plotting against him with the Ḥamza family of *ashrāf* who had an Ismaʿili allegiance. None of these switches of alliance led to internal family conflicts. However, when his own son joined the Ottoman military leader, Özdemir Pasha, he was the first to cut his ties with him.[15] The story of this sayyid is also representative of the conflict between the old and the new social order that was caused by the arrival of the Ottomans. Sayyid ʿAbdallāh clearly saw that the Ottomans were different from all other conquerors who came to Yemen. The reasons for this will be discussed in greater detail in the following section. However, within a decade of his decision, it became commonplace for sayyids of the most prestigious clans to join the Ottoman administrative and military ranks.

A true exploration of the structure of the sayyid clans is impossible without inquiry into the role of women in those families. It is primarily through marriage that the family expanded its

[13] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr* NF C.35.ar, ff. 74b, 79ab.
[14] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 82b-84a.
[15] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, f. 84a.

reach. But there were other roles that only women could fulfill (or that were delegated to women) that enhanced the connections and prestige of the family. Women of the Zaydi elite sayyid families played an important role in the family itself, but they were also local political leaders, intermediaries between different sayyid clans, and scholars, transmitters of religious knowledge.[16] The following sub-sections will include them in the analysis of the history of the sayyids in Zaydi society prior to the Ottoman conquest.

Primarily, women were a tool for the expansion of the above-mentioned "wide embrace" of the family. Their marriages helped the Zaydi *ashrāf* consolidate key lineages and property ownership. *Sharīfa*s were important figures in keeping households together, as they took care not only of their own children, but also of the orphans of the sayyid clans. Breastfeeding was another way of creating horizontal bonds between different sayyid clans as well as links to local scholarly and tribal families. In addition to their family tasks, women of the leading sayyid clans were important figures in local communities. They intervened in local affairs and often undertook socio-economic tasks such as the organization of charity, funerals, and food distributions. The women of the sayyid families at the top of the political hierarchy left an architectural mark on the cities they lived in. Among the *sharīfa*s we also find women-scholars, copyists of books and authors of original works, and persons who had opinions on complex religio-political matters such as the succession to the imamate. As will be demonstrated in future sections, women seem to lose their positions in society in the Ottoman and post-Ottoman period. While it is possible that they continued to play the same

[16] Comparatively across the Islamic world this was not a unique situation. See for instance: Asma Sayeed, *Women and the Transmission of Religious Knowledge in Islam*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilisation (Cambridge University Press, 2013); Julia Bray, "The Family in the Medieval Islamic World," *History Compass* 9, no. 9 (September 2011): 731–42. A recent study elucidated how women acted as local rulers in Seljuk lands: Antony Eastmond, *Tamta's World: The Life and Encounters of a Medieval Noblewoman from the Middle East to Mongolia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

roles as earlier, the written record of their actions disappears from the surviving sources, including *sīras* of imams. This suggests that the Zaydi state underwent a transformation that affected society and family structures. Thus, the roles that the *sharīfa*s were playing earlier started to be performed in another way or stopped being valuable to society and state. In the later, post-Ottoman, period it is only the *sharīfa*s of the Qasimid line that still appear in the written record, usually as owners of books that they inherit from their fathers.[17]

Internal hierarchy in a sayyid family

The extended sayyid family had several internal divisions. The gender division drew a line between men and women. However, taken on its own it does little to explain the peculiarities of the sayyids as a political elite. This section, therefore, will focus on a different hierarchy – that of occupations, even though gender divisions came into play here as well. The hierarchy of occupations within the sayyid families was the reverse image of society as a whole. While in society as a whole literacy and prestigious occupations were only accessible to the few, in the sayyid families most members were literate, and a majority were engaged in occupations of some prestige. Only a few people mentioned in the sources composed in the sayyid milieu are described as poor and engaged in agriculture. This was a result of two factors. On the one hand, there was certainly a prejudice among the educated sayyids to disregard their "down-shifting" relatives. But it was there

[17] Some manuscripts that were in the ownership of women of the Qasimid family include: NF A.15.ar (f. 1a states the ownership of Jawzīya bint al-imām al-Mutawakkil [Ismāʾīl], the third Qasimid imam), NF A.37.ar (a statement inside the binding mentions that Ruqayya bint ʿAlī b. al-imām al-Muʾayyad (Muḥammad), the granddaughter of the second Qasimid imam, owned the manuscript), NF E.169.ar (statement on f. 15a of a daughter of an eighteenth century Qasimid imam), NF E.259.ar (f. 1a - in the ownership of Khadīja, the daughter of imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad), NF F.32.ar (f. 32a states the ownership of another daughter of imam al-Muʾayyad, Zaynab), NF F. 48.ar (a statement on f. 3a shows that the volume was in the ownership of another daughter of imam al-Muʾayyad, Fāṭima).

for a reason. Since sayyid families in Zaydi Yemen provided both boys and girls with some level of education, the group as a whole had a better chance at moving upwards in society. Life trajectories, however, were dependent on a variety of factors, many of which were beyond human control.

At the top of the hierarchical pyramid of the sayyid family we discover a competition between scholars (*ahl al-ʿilm*) and political leaders (*ahl al-riyāsa*). On first sight, the authors and compilers of the family history, who were all scholars, seem to place scholars like themselves a bit higher. This explains why most biographies in the family history of the Banū al-Wazīr included references to study and seem to imply that most members of the family were scholars. However, if we search for the term *ijtihād*, the highest achievable level of scholarship and knowledge that allows the person to pass his own decision, we find only nine biographies that claim this level was achieved. And out of these nine people, the credentials of one, imam al-Mahdī ʿAlī b. Muḥammad, were disputed by his own descendants.[18] Aside from Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Wazīr, a recognized authority in Zaydi intellectual history, the remaining seven (presumably top-level) scholars were not purely intellectuals and were all engaged in other activities, mainly of the military-political kind.

We would also expect that the crème de la crème among these sayyid-scholars would be those who are marked as potential candidates for the imamate. On the pages of the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* we find several such candidates; however, not all of them claimed the imamate on the basis

[18] On the imam reaching the level of *ijtihād* see *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, im. 261 (based on the pagination of the digital copy from the IZbACF collection: https://elibrary.mara.gov.om/mktbtt-muosstt-aliemam-zed-bn-ale-althqafett/mktbtt-muosstt-aliemam-zed-bn-ale-althqafett/ktab/?id=12007#book/262 Accessed May 19, 2020. The dispute about whether he actually reached the level and, consequentially, whether he met the requirement for the imamate is presented in al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 9a.

of their achievements in study. One of the earliest recorded examples (from the seventh century AH / thirteenth century CE) was the brothers Yaḥyā and Muḥammad, sons of Manṣūr b. Mufaḍḍal b. Ḥajjāj, both of whom saw themselves as candidates for the imamate. Neither of them is described as a famous scholar in the text of the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr.* For example, it is remarked about Muḥammad that he was a scholar of *furūʿ* and *uṣūl* (lit. branches and roots), terms that can be used to denote disciplines within any science, but usually used to denote two disciplines of Islamic law – the "roots" are the principles of legal reasoning, and the "branches" are the study of norms of Islamic law.[19] The terms used in the biography to describe his knowledge are quite broad, and no mention of other related supplementary sciences that were necessary for a jurist are noted. This leads us to think that this is a vague descriptor for a scholar.[20] We would search in vain for their biographies among the scholars or for traces of works written by them in manuscript catalogues. There is no doubt that they were literate and, possibly, well-educated men, but they were not scholars or jurists by primary occupation.

A later example of a candidate for the imamate mentioned in the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* is Muḥammad b. Yūsuf b. Ṣalāḥ b. al-Murtaḍā (d. after 890/1485). Unlike his predecessors he is described as a scholar with a high level of knowledge who taught in the Abhar mosque in Ṣanʿāʾ.[21] He was even encouraged to launch his claim to the imamate in Thulā, but he did not receive much

[19] N. Calder, "Uṣūl Al-Fiḳh" ; M. G. Carter, "Uṣūl," in *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2012.
[20] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr* NF C.35.ar ff. 63b, 65b-66a, 72b.
[21] The Abhar mosque is located in a quarter of the same name to the west of the Great Mosque of Ṣanʿāʾ. Robert B. Serjeant and Ronald Lewcock, eds., *Sanʿāʾ: An Arabian Islamic City* (London: World of Islam Festival Trust, 1983), 319n. The mosque was built on the orders of Fāṭima bint al-amīr al-Asad b. Ibrāhīm, the wife of the imam al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Muḥammad (d. 793/1391) and the daughter of the leader of the Kurds of Dhamār. *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr* NF C.35.ar ff. 74b, 79b; Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ḥajrī, *Masājid Ṣanʿāʾ: ʿāmirihā wa muwaẓẓifihā* (Ṣanʿāʾ: Iṣdārāt wizārat al-thaqāfa wa-l-siyāḥa, 2004), 8–9.

support there.[22] If we consider that the mosque in question was one of the smaller mosques of Ṣanʿāʾ and that the supposedly prominent scholar had to move out of the city to make his call for the imamate, questions arise about how wide his fame as a scholar actually was in the city of Ṣanʿāʾ. Indeed, a search for his traces in biographical dictionaries and manuscript catalogues yields no results. The data allow us to start questioning the extent to which the requirement of scholarship was actually met by the Zaydi imams and whether it was the major factor underlying their successful calls for the imamate.

Interestingly, the education and scholarship criteria seem to have mattered more for hypothetical candidates for the imamate – women. Women, as is made clear from both relevant Zaydi texts and the historical practice, never became imams in a Zaydi polity. However, in some cases the idea was floated that some women could make fine imams. We have eight examples from the history of the Banū al-Wazīr of such hypothetical candidates, all of them highly educated women who also wrote their own works and sometimes had a leadership role in local affairs.[23] This points to the gap that existed between the ideal criteria for the imamate and the ones that actually mattered. One such truly important factor was social networks that the ambitious candidate could tap into to achieve an agreement of elites that would propel him forward. Women were part of these networks, but no matter their education or personal charisma they could not rise to the highest rank in the hierarchy.

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[22] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr* NF C.35.ar ff. 80b, 86a.

[23] They are Dahmā bint Yaḥyā b. al-Murtaḍā, Fāṭima bint al-Ḥasan b. al-imām al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, Fāṭima bint al-imām al-Mahdī ʿAlī b. Muḥammad, Jawzīya bint Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Qāsimī, Ṣafīya bint al-Murtaḍā b. al-Mufaḍḍal, Shams al-Jūr bint al-Hādī b. Ibrāhīm, Shams al-Jūr bint Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā and her sister ʿĀtika bint Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā. *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr* NF C.35.ar.

This leads us to the second, much larger group of sayyids at the top of the hierarchy – the political leaders, or *ahl al-riyāsa.* They were usually people who had received some education but then chose political and military leadership over other occupations. The *ahl al-riyāsa* were a group of sayyids who were involved in the administration of Yemen, some as local leaders, some as men in the service of imams. Many of these sayyids are given the title of amīr in the sources, thus indicating their link to the military domain as well. Some of them are also described as lords of particular localities (*ṣāḥib X*). Unfortunately, sources on this class of sayyids are scarce. Not being scholars, they usually did not make it into biographical dictionaries, and we are therefore limited to fragments of information. The *ahl al-riyāsa* will be discussed in greater detail in a separate section below. The *ahl al-riyāsa* also include a group of sayyids who pursued a military/courtly career. From the limited information that we have on such people it seems that they had to master a variety of skills, ranging from equestrianism (*rukūb al-khayl*) to *adab*. They seem to overlap with sayyids who became professionally involved with the military (*tajannud*). The *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* mentions three sayyids as occupied with *tajannud*[24]*,* four as having a relationship to equestrianism (*rukūb al-khayl*),[25] and one case of a skilled archer.[26] The limited information about these sayyids in the family history indicates that the educated groups of the sayyids did not think highly of them.

[24] Qāsim b. Aḥmad (*Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr* NF C.35.ar f. 86b); Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad and his son Ismāʿīl b. Ibrāhīm (*Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr* NF C.35.ar f. 86a).
[25] Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. al-Murtaḍā (*Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr* NF D.556.ar ff. 88a-89a); ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad (*Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr* NF C.35.ar f. 79b); ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad (*Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar f. 48b); ʿIzz al-Dīn b. Ṣalāḥ b. Aḥmad al-Wazīr (ʿUthmān b. ʿAlī al-Wazīr, *Aṭrāf al-silsila allatī hiya bi-aktāf al-nubuwwa wa-l-wilāya,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 98a-98b).
[26] Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil (*Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr* NF C.35.ar f. 80b). On his archery the history states: *lahu al-yad al-ṭūlā fī-l-rimāya*).

Indeed, they are in the group of "others" who "had no relation to knowledge" (*lā taʿalluq bi-l-ʿilm*). This wide category included people who were engaged in trade, the most prestigious form of which was the horse trade, and agriculture. For example, two representatives of the extended Banū al-Wazīr, al-Bāqir b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. Qāsim and his brother ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. Qāsim were educated people. They were the sons of amīr Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. Qāsim, *ṣāḥib* al-Rukūb, a location not far from Ṣaʿda. We can note here the link between the *ahl al-riyāsa* and the people engaging in prestigious trade. Another bridge for the enterprising sons of the amīr was their mother, a daughter of a *funduq*-owner in Ṣaʿda, bint Ḥasan b. Jābir b. Ḥajjāj, and the niece of the scholar Yaḥyā b. Jābir b. Ḥajjāj al-Ṣaʿdī al-Naṣrī. By providing the two brothers with links to several groups of society – scholars, *ahl al-riyāsa,* city merchant elites – the biographer underlined the wide social networks in which they were operating.

The hierarchy of occupations was concluded by those sayyids who occupied themselves with agriculture (*zirāʿa*). Eight names are mentioned in the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* as people engaged in plowing (*ḥirātha*) or agriculture (*zirāʿa, filāḥa*). It seems that those were the downwardly socially mobile members of the family. Their traces disappear from the family history even if they have children. With each generation not only the link to knowledge (*ʿilm*) disappears, but even to literacy.[27] This led to exclusion from the family circle; the incomplete genealogical lines in the family history imply that they lost their *sayyid* status in the eyes of their scholarly relatives.

[27] On one such sayyid-farmer the *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr* remarks that he had a strange (*ʿajīb*) handwriting. Given that the term *ʿajīb* usually denoted something extraordinary, wondrous and out of place in Classical Arabic, this can indicate that the sayyid-farmer's ability to write in a clear hand was an unusual occurrence. This is indirect evidence that the down-shifting sayyids were usually expected to lose their literacy. *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF D. 556 f. 101b (note on al-Hādī b. Muḥammad b. Murtaḍā).

This short overview demonstrates that the extended sayyid clans in pre-Ottoman Yemen included people engaged in all types of occupations at all levels of society. The different links that these people brought to the family added to the cumulative social capital of a sayyid clan. The hierarchies within a sayyid family are possibly reflective of the wider hierarchies in Zaydi society, even though the sayyid clans boasted a higher level of literacy vis-à-vis other groups of Zaydi society. One notable observation from this overview concerns the top of the sayyid hierarchy. As we have discovered, the sayyid-scholars and the sayyid-politicians (*ahl al-riyāsa*) shared their status as the most respected members of the clan.

Family matters: children, education, households

Many other social practices played an important role in the consolidation of the sayyid clan and the establishment of horizontal links with local families. They can be organized in several groups: practices related to the upbringing of children (breastfeeding, taking care of orphans, education), and matters related to property. Some of these practices were predominantly the domain of women. *Sharīfa*s were usually trusted with matters concerning younger children. Milk kinship in particular is a practice that survived for many centuries in the Zaydi milieu, as a method for establishing new horizontal social ties and confirming existing hierarchies and alliances.[28] The *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* offers only one example from the pre-Ottoman period – Ṣafīya bint al-Murtaḍā breastfeeding her nephew Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Murtaḍā.[29] In one other case there is a brief mention that a *sharīfa*, Umm al-Faḍl bint al-Murtaḍā b. Mufaḍḍal, was so pious and shy that

[28] The practice of milk kinship in Islamic societies and the legal regulations surrounding it are researched in an expanding field of sociological and anthropological literature. An overview of some of the main themes can be found in Peter Parkes, "Milk Kinship in Islam. Substance, Structure, History*," *Social Anthropology* 13, no. 3 (2005): 307–29.
[29] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr* NF C.35.ar f. 43a.

she would not even show her face to her cousin who was also her milk brother.[30] These two examples, though insufficient to arrive at solid conclusions, still suggest that in the pre-Ottoman period milk kinship was concentrated within the sayyid families and was not seen as a way of creating horizontal ties with non-sayyid families. We have more evidence from the post-Ottoman, Qasimid period. For example, a series of birth certificates found in NF D.244.ar. concern the al-Muhallā family that gained prominence under the Qāsimids as scholars and judges.[31] They record this non-sayyid family's push to extend and strengthen horizontal links with prominent sayyid families, among them the Banū al-Wazīr, in Sharaf and the city of Ṣanʿāʾ, though milk kinship.[32] This could indicate that the introduction of non-sayyid families into elite circles resulted in a "democratization" of the practice of milk kinship and the reinterpretation of its function in society as a method of creating horizontal social ties that allowed families to advance together.

The care for orphans in sayyid families was another task often undertaken by women, especially if the children were young and only taking their first steps in education. By taking in orphans from distant sayyid relatives the *sharīfa*s ensured that the clan was consolidated and no sayyid offspring was left without attention. Such care resulted in close bonds building up between the orphan and his new family. An example is the above-mentioned Ṣafīya bint al-Murtaḍā b. Mufaḍḍal who took into her care and educated (*tawallat taʾdīb*) the son of her daughter, Jawzīya bint Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Qāsimī.[33] It is unclear why the son, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, was not brought up by his own mother after the death of his father. It is equally

[30] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr* NF D.556.ar f. 93b, 104a-104b.
[31] al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 2, p. 1677.
[32] Birth certificates: NF D.244.ar, ff. 3a, 11b, 12a, 12b, 109a. Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Muhallā in particular had encountered in his early years many women, wives and daughters of Zaydi notables (see f. 109a).
[33] *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, f. 104a.

unknown who took custody of his sister. It seems possible that his stepfather did not wish to provide for the children of his wife's first husband. It is also possible that the decision to take the child into the mother's family signaled the relative standing of the two families; the mother's side was more powerful and thus made decisions about the fates of the children.

It should be noted that *sharīfa*s were not the only ones who took care of children of the sayyids by effectively adopting them into the family. The examples listed above are remarkable because the historians of the family noted them down. It seems that more often the *sharīf*s decided on children's education and upbringing. The family history includes considerable numbers of biographies in which men are bringing up boys, sometimes the children of distant relatives if relatives at all. The examples that the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* preserves are usually focused on sayyid-scholars who take care of their students in a fatherly manner. Such examples demonstrate that education, beyond the basics, was usually the responsibility of men, and that children above a certain age would usually pass into their care.

In the context of the upbringing of orphans, Zaydi *sharīfa*s often found themselves responsible for the primary education of the younger generation. The above-mentioned Ṣafīya taught her grandson to read the Qur'ān and to write, thus introducing him to the necessary basics of the education of a sayyid from a scholarly family. According to the *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* Ṣafīya was an accomplished calligrapher and she seems to have succeeded in passing her knowledge on to her grandson, who is described as the *kātib* of the family.[34] Ṣafīya also brought up Ibrāhīm b. ʿAlī b. Ḥasan b. al-ʿAfīf, who was a member of the Banū al-Wazīr through a different branch, and taught

[34] Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Murtaḍā seems to have had an interesting life, as a scholar, a politician engaged in negotiations between the Rasulids, the tribes and the imams, and as a rich person, a horse-owner and the owner of estates, including a house in Ṣanʿāʾ. His functions as *kātib* in the family seem to have included the writing down of testaments (*waṣīya*). *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, ff. 100a-101b, 104a.

him reading and writing.[35] Two hundred years after Ṣafīya, we discover a similar pattern in the life of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim b. Muḥammad (d. 1029/1620), who was educated by his aunt Umm al-Ghayth bint ʿAlī b. Muḥammad after the death of his father Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad in 977/1569-70, when the young sayyid was only nine years old.[36] The extent of Ṣafīya's engagement with the younger generation of sayyids was impressive but not unique. Some other *sharīfas* were tasked with organizing education on an even larger scale. Dahmāʾ bint Yaḥyā b. al-Murtaḍā, the sister of imam al-Mahdī Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā, was responsible for teaching in the city of Thulā (*qāmat bi-amr al-tadrīs bi-madīnat Thulā*). This was probably due to the fact that she was a scholar in her own right and collected a library that she made accessible to students. Among the students who benefited from her knowledge and teaching was imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn. As a sign of gratitude to his grandaunt he expanded the dome over her grave in Thulā and built a mosque next to it. [37] This is a rare record of the architectural acknowledgment of the role of Zaydi *sharīfas* in urban centers.

However, it is to be noted that the educational projects of women of the Zaydi elite were still predominantly family enterprises in their scope. While we have no precise lists of students from these schools, it is more probable that a majority of the students were of sayyid background and were brought together as relatives, albeit distant. This is confirmed in a series of episodes described in the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* in which *sharīfas* protected the children of sayyid clans in situations of danger, like famine, war, or plague outbursts. In one episode, Ḥaṣīna bint Muḥammad

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[35] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr*, NF C.35.ar, ff. 49b, 63a.
[36] Al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubhda al-mushīra,* Br. L. Or. 3329, f.4b; death date of Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad – al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 91a. In the case of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim, his father's side clearly had the upper hand in the decision on who will bring him up, unlike Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad discussed above,
[37] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr*, NF C.35.ar, f. 84b, 90a; al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar, ff. 4b-6a.

b. ʿAlī is tasked with taking care of the children of several sayyids in a time of crisis (*azma*) due to the personal wealth available to her.[38] Among her protégés in that period was Muḥammad b. ʿAlī, the future ruler of Ṣanʿāʾ who claimed the title of imam as al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (d. 793/1391). It seems plausible that the wealth – lands – at her disposal came into her custody through the political careers of her relatives from the Banū al-Wazīr and especially her brother, imam al-Mahdī ʿAlī b. Muḥammad (d. 773/1372).[39] *Sharīfa*s were, in times of crisis, effectively organizing boarding schools for the children of the sayyid elite. But in the absence of any state funds to provide for such an institution, the financial burden fell entirely on the *sharīfa*s themselves. Thus, only the wealthiest of them could take up such a responsibility.

It was no less common for men to take care of boys. In particular, it seems, the teacher-student relationship would sometimes result in close, family-like bonds. This is visible in the story of the education of al-Murtaḍā b. al-Mufaḍḍal of the Banū al-Wazīr (d. 732/1332). He was sent by his father al-Mufaḍḍal b. Manṣūr to study with imam al-Mahdī Ibrāhīm b. Tāj al-Dīn (d. 683/1285). He equipped his son with a letter to the imam that included a request to not only educate the child, but also to take care of him. According to a personal account from the sayyid, the imam read the letter to the child, and explained to him that it meant that his father asked them never to be separated from each other. And indeed, the imam took care of the boy and kept him close. The young

[38] Her personal wealth is discussed in al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar f. 7a (*kānat muwaasiʿan ʿalayhā aqtār wāḥida*). The crisis in question is probably the conflict between the sayyid clan of Ḥamza and the imam al-Mahdī ʿAlī b. Muḥammad (d. 773/1372) over control of Ṣanʿāʾ. *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr*, NF C.35.ar, f. 90a.

[39] Imam al-Mahdī ʿAlī b. Muḥammad overcame the resistance of two alternative candidates for the imamate and conquered Dhamār. His descendant, imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, however, remarked that despite his achievements he did not meet the requirements of the imamate in full. (al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* vol. 1, NF A.3.ar f.9a: *ghayr kāmilayn fī shurūṭ al-imāma wa istiḥqāq al-ziʿām*a – the dual is used to speak also about his son imam al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Muḥammad).

al-Murtaḍā even recounts sharing a broadcloth (*jūkha*) with the imam at night.[40] This story goes to show the close ties that held together the imams and their supporters.

Orphaned children were also taken into the care of their elder siblings. In the case of the above-mentioned al-Murtaḍā b. al-Mufaḍḍal, after the death of his father, his elder brothers Ibrāhīm and Aḥmad took care of his basic needs and his education. The brothers could undertake such a task and provide the young al-Murtaḍā with opportunities that few sayyids at the time could have. The brothers inherited a high social stance from their father and, thus, had a wide network of personal connections to tap into. One of them was a scholar, the other a tax collector for the imams in several western regions (Ḥaḍūr Banī Shihāb, al-Khayyām).[41] As a result, they had the social capital as well as the money to provide their brother with a first-class education. This led to a brilliant career for the orphan. Al-Murtaḍā, who did not claim the imamate for himself, appears to us from the pages of the *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr* as the maker of imams. Imam al-Mahdī Muḥammad b. Muṭahhar (d. 729/1329), his son imam al-Wāthiq Muṭahhar b. Muḥammad (d. after 762/1361, not recognized as an imam by all factions) and a competitor for the title of imam, al-Mahdī ʿAlī b. Muḥammad, all sought his approval and cherished their associations with him.[42] Al-Murtaḍā's path in life thus shows how social prestige was accumulated by consecutive generations of a family and the role of family ties, in particular, connections between brothers and their shared custody, in propelling the fortunes of a family forward.

We have so far discussed the wide embrace of a sayyid clan and the ways in which it created and maintained social ties. A sayyid household, i.e., the living setting of a sayyid family,

[40] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, f. 105a.
[41] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, f. 105a, 111a. Ḥadūr Banī Shihāb is located in the Banī Maṭar area west of Ṣanʿāʾ. Al-Khayyām seems to correspond to an area in the vicinity of Kawkabān. al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 1, pp. 589, 880.
[42] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 50a-53a.

was less expansive. The *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr* provides several clues to how families lived together. Usually, several generations of blood relatives resided in one household. Brothers could stay in one house after marriage, and their wives would be brought into the family. Unmarried sisters and in some cases married sisters with their husbands would also stay under one roof. A sayyid family living together would usually act in a unified manner and there are few reports of internal dissent. There are, however, some exceptions. In particular, political positions, especially opinions on which imam to support, could have practical repercussions for the daily life of a sayyid family. When the imamate was contested by imam al-Wāthiq billāh Muṭahhar b. Muḥammad and imam al-Mahdī ʿAlī b. Muḥammad, one Banū al-Wazīr household was experiencing a difficult moment. A witness and participant of the family debates, ʿAlī b. al-Murtaḍā b. al-Mufaḍḍal states that "there were three opinions (*madhhab*) in the house." His sister Ṣafīya bint al-Murtaḍā and he supported imam al-Mahdī, Ṣafīya's husband Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Qāsimī supported the imam al-Wāthiq. Another sister of ʿAlī, Umm al-Faḍl bint al-Murtaḍā, was undecided. Tensions ran high: when Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā would bring meat from al-Sūda which was controlled by al-Wāthiq, his wife would refuse to eat it claiming that the meat came from a territory controlled by a man who was loyal to the Bāṭinis (Ismā'ilis).[43] For her this was tantamount to non-Muslim territory.[44] This episode demonstrates how political matters could have practical repercussions.

Ṣafīya's strength of opinion was considered extraordinary both by her brother ʿAlī and the compilers of the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr*. On closer inspection, this episode seems to imply that the Zaydi women were not participating directly in the running of the household. In this story, Ṣafīya

[43] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, ff. 93b-94a.
[44] Zaydis and Imamis prohibited the consumption of non-Muslim meat. David Freidenreich, "The Implications of Unbelief: Tracing the Emergence of Distinctively Shiʿi Notions Regarding the Food and Impurity of Non-Muslims," *Islamic Law and Society* 18, no. 1 (January 1, 2011): 53–84.

is not the person who travels to the market to buy the meat, nor is she the person handing out the money for its acquisition.[45] Her protest comes across as a symbolic gesture, no matter how annoying to people sharing meals with her. One could even argue that the episode implies the opposite – most *sharīfa*s did not have any say in political matters that could impact the daily life of the household. The episode also allows us to infer that the unity of sayyid households was not a given. Unity of opinions was even harder to achieve in the extended family with all its "associates" from outside the circle of blood relatives. In particular, it seems that in households that had close ties to different political actors and that had a higher share of educated people, conflicts of the religious and political kind were more difficult to avoid.

In conclusion, a subset of methods for the expansion and maintenance of the alliances of a sayyid family relied on the upbringing of children and involved women. Milk kinship, care for orphans and support of sayyid-children in times of crisis were all methods for the consolidation of the sayyid family, a way to enforce association. However, these practices could not ensure the same level of social coherence as state institutions can. The slow transfer of these functions to centralized state institutions was one of the reasons for the volatility of the political order in the regions of Northern Yemen outside of the state's control. As a result, while powerful sayyid clans continued to provide for their children in domestic settings and limit the access of non-sayyids to education, undisputed sovereignty was hard to achieve.

[45] *Sharīfa*s sometimes traveled to the market. One example that we have is the aunt of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim b. Muḥammad (d. 1029/1620), Umm al-Ghayth bint ʿAlī b. Muḥammad, who routinely went to the market with her nephew. al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra,* Br.L. Or. 3329, f. 4b.

Marriage

Marriage was a central method for the consolidation and expansion of the sayyid clan.[46] Marriage presupposed that the woman relocated to the house of the husband, however, this did not mean that ties with her blood relatives were cut completely. Thus, women were providing key links for the Zaydi families through marriage that allowed the extension of the family to include people of important social standing – a member of another sayyid clan, a scholar, a city notable or a merchant.[47]

It is also due to this principle that marriages of women of the sayyid clans were a complex affair. Marriages to women outside of the sayyid circles, while theoretically possible, were strictly regulated by the families. Imams and sayyids are known to have taken wives from the tribes and from scholarly families of tribal origin, often for political reasons. The marriage of a *sharīfa* to a non-sayyid, however, was unthinkable. One reason for the prohibitive stance of sayyid families on this point was the fact that *sharīfa*s were important assets for the sayyid clans and that marriage to a woman of such descent could entail legal benefits for her offspring. It required some explanation, however, as it touched on the sensitive question of *kafāʾa*, equivalence of spouses.[48] In a case

[46] It is still perceived in this way by modern *sayyid*s, as is demonstrated by scholars who conducted field research in Yemen. See in particular the work of Shelagh Weir who demonstrates the link between financial means in modern sayyid families, the number of their progeny and their status in society. Shelagh Weir, *A Tribal Order: Politics and Law in the Mountains of Yemen*, Modern Middle East Series (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 55–66.
[47] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr*, NF C.35.ar, f. 27b. And similar remarks for modern northern Yemen: Weir, 65–66.
[48] The issue of *kafāʾa* was discussed in all Islamic legal schools. See Y. Linant de Bellefonds, "Kafāʾa," in *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2012. An overview of Zaydi opinions on the matter can be found in Gabriele vom Bruck, *Islam, Memory, and Morality in Yemen: Ruling Families in Transition*, Contemporary Anthropology of Religion (New York NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 132–35. Comparatively speaking, the Ḥadrami sayyids from southern Yemen faced the same issue and had similarly strong debates on the topic. See, for example, Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley,

narrated in the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* a *faqīh* from Ẓafār, al-Washshāḥ al-Kulālī, had to provide an answer (*jawāb*) to the *shīʿa* of the region surrounding Ṣanʿāʾ and including the *hijra* of Waqash (i.e. of several sayyid clans including Banī al-Wazīr who were predominantly based in Waqash). Their concern was that some members of the Banū Fāhim tribe, also from the Ṣanʿāʾ region, had received permission from another *faqīh* to marry *sharīfa*s. al-Washshāḥ, himself originally from the Kulāl tribe, ruled that such a permission denigrated the Prophet and should be punished with death.[49] It is interesting that in this case the *faqīh* chose not only to address the question of marriage, but also to condemn the person who ruled contrary to tradition. The issue, however, remained contentious, and the Banū al-Wazīr kept the document in the hand of the *faqīh* in their archive.[50] Thus, marriages of *sharīfa*s outside of the sayyid clans remained impossible and marital alliances with non-sayyids were only conducted through the intake of brides from tribal families.

Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2006), 144–51, 173–81; Zanariah Noor and Nazirah Lee, "The Conflict among Hadrami Arab Community in Malaysia Regarding the Issues of Kafā'a in Muslim Marriage," *Hawwa* 11, no. 2–3 (June 9, 2014): 252–74. Notably, not all sayyids across Muslim societies pursued these strict rules and some allowed sayyid descent to be confirmed through a maternal line; an example is a *naṣab-nāma* from Badakhshan that sees sayyid descent through the maternal line as *dākhil-i naṣab,* i.e. part of the lineage. *Naṣab-nāma-i sayyid al-sādāt.* Badakhshan Manuscript Project 21. https://dpul.princeton.edu/badakhshan_collection/catalog/pg15bm395 (Accessed July 7, 2021). This document was discussed during the conference "Genealogical History in the Persianate World" by Jo-Ann Gross in her talk "Digitizing the Ismaili Nasab-nama tradition in Badakhshan", Princeton, April 22, 2021.

[49] *Inna man faʿala dhālika wa aftā bihi istaḥaqq al-qatl in lam yatub liʾannahu istakhaffa bi-rasūl allāh ṣallā-llāh ʿalayhi wa ālihi wa istahān. Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr* NF D.556.ar f. 105b. Ibn Abī al-Rijāl provides information about this scholar in a direct citation from the *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr* which underlines the importance of this contribution of the otherwise unknown scholar. IAR Vol. 4, p 439. The approving stance of Ibn Abi al-Rijāl was probably linked to the fact that his patron, imam al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim produced a similar legal opinion in his time. vom Bruck, *Islam, Memory, and Morality in Yemen: Ruling Families in Transition*, 131.

[50] *Wa-l-jawāb bi-khaṭṭ kātibihi mawjūd bayna kutubinā. Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, f. 105b.

Despite the fact that most marriages were strategic and women were usually excluded from the negotiation process, the sources present some cases where *sharīfa*s made their own decisions about marriage. Such opportunities were open to some women at the very top of the sayyid hierarchies. This was particularly the case with women who could pursue a scholarly career. Another reason for such independent decisions was the status of the family. For example, Fāṭima bint al-imām al-Mahdī ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm initiated a divorce due to the suspicions that her husband was involved in a case of poisoning. She was able to do that as the daughter of an imam.[51] In another case, Ṣafīya bint al-Murtaḍā b. Mufaḍḍal (d. 771/1369-70), a woman-scholar, chose to get married at the then late age of thirty years not out of need for marriage but to be able to study *kalām* with her husband.[52] The two sisters Shams al-Jūr and ʿĀtika, daughters of sayyid Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Wazīr, chose not to get married at all in order to pursue a pious and ascetic life.[53] Shams al-Jūr bint al-Hādī b. Ibrāhīm (d. 894/1489) was married three times; her last marriage, as the authors of the *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr* remark, was her own decision – she had an aversion to living alone (*karh al-waḥda*).[54] These few examples show that women of the *ashrāf* families had agency in deciding their own fates. However, the number of women who could act in such a way was limited and it was not a coincidence that these particular women were able to exercise a certain freedom in family matters. All of the women mentioned here came from powerful sayyid clans,

[51] Similar cases of independent decision making and high status among women relatives of the imams are registered in the twentieth century in pre-revolutionary Yemen. vom Bruck, *Islam, Memory, and Morality in Yemen: Ruling Families in Transition*, 139–40.
[52] *Tazawwajat baʿd an balaghat thalāthīn sana bi-l-sayyid al-ʿallāma Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Qāsimī lā raghbatan fī-l-zawāj lakin raghbatan fī an taqraʾa ʿalayhi ʿilm al-kalām. Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 42b, 46b-47a, 49a; Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr wa-majmaʿ al-buḥūr fī tarājim rijāl al-zaydīya*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raqīb Muṭahhar Muḥammad Ḥajar, 1st ed. (Ṣaʿda: Markaz Ahl al-Bayt li-l-dirāsāt al-islāmīya, 2004), vol. 2, pp. 432–34. The traces of her husband, sayyid Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Qāsimī are lost.
[53] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 76a, 80a.
[54] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 28ab.

received an education and were encouraged by their relatives to develop leadership roles, as scholars or community leaders. As a result, they were acknowledged by their contemporaries and biographers as equals of imams.

The structure of sayyid clans, their internal hierarchy and its most basic method for expansion has changed little over time. Attention to genealogy and marriage, especially by limiting the marriage options of the *sharīfa*s was a signature trait of Zaydi sayyid families. The internal hierarchy of a sayyid family demonstrates a respect for leadership qualities, sometimes even above pure scholarly success. These are the more constant traits of the sayyid clans as a political elite. However, such internal structures as discussed above, especially those forged through in-law relationships, were not stable and dissension within the extended sayyid clan and its associates was common. To ensure the stability of alliances other channels of association were used. We will consider them in the following three subsections in which we will analyze the changes in the status of sayyids as a political elite in the pre-Ottoman, Ottoman and, briefly, the early Qasimid period.

Ashrāf as ahl al-riyāsa before the Ottoman conquest

The main socio-political function of the *ashrāf* in pre-Ottoman Zaydi Yemen was their role as local rulers and administrators, in short as *ahl al-riyāsa,* men of leadership.[55] How did sayyids achieve the status of local rulers and what mechanisms did they employ to maintain their position? Participation in affairs of the state as official appointees of the imams, networking, and the accumulation of wealth were the three methods that allowed the sayyids to enhance the status of their

[55] *Riʾāsa*, supreme position, was a term equally used for scholars that were considered leaders in a certain domain and in the political struggles of various factions, as for example, the Mamluk households of Ottoman Egypt. See A. Havemann, C. E. Bosworth, and S. Soucek, "Raʾīs," in *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2012.

families and pass it between generations. Official appointments were important, though not indispensable, for the formalization of the link between a sayyid family and a geographical region. The accumulation of wealth was an important tool to ensure the transmission of status between different generations, though, as I will demonstrate, sources of wealth mattered to this project. In the end, the building of networks through marriage and the assumption of leadership roles (by both men and women) in the locations that they lived in played the most important part in helping generations of sayyids maintain their position in society as a political elite.

This and the following sections of the chapter will focus on three sayyid families – the Banū al-Wazīr, the Āl al-Muʾayyad and the Āl al-Ḥamza. A pre-modern map of Yemen would establish the connection of these most influential sayyid clans to certain regions. **The Ṣanʿāʾ region** was closely associated with the Banū al-Wazīr. Throughout their long history the Banū al-Wazīr were one of the few sayyid clans of Yemen who can be described as imam-makers. This sayyid family dominated the political sphere of Zaydi Yemen in the eighth-ninth centuries AH / fourteenth – fifteenth centuries CE. Members of the family were mostly known as scholars, but also held political and military posts.[56] The Banū al-Wazīr inscribed their history in a collection of biographies – the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* – that allows us to reconstruct their position in society. The accumulated social capital of the family that controlled several regions in Yemen and was prominent in Ṣanʿāʾ was so great that even after the turmoil of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries they continued to hold prominent positions and survived until modern times. They were active participants in key events of the twentieth century, supporters of imam Yaḥyā Ḥamīd al-Dīn, who at first were

[56] Contemporary descendants of the family amend their historical vision of the family and claim that it was a scholarly (*usrat ʿilm*) rather than a political (*usrat siyāsa*) clan. vom Bruck, *Islam, Memory, and Morality in Yemen: Ruling Families in Transition*, 291 n.36.

rewarded by government posts, then were driven into opposition, and finally organized a coup against the imam and his assassination in 1948.[57]

The family got its name from Muḥammad b. al-Mufaḍḍal b. Ḥajjāj (d. 600/1203). He was considered eligible for the imamate and even received some pledges of allegiance (*bayʿa*), but then he gave up his claim and chose to support the imamate of al-Manṣūr ʿAbdallāh b. Ḥamza (d. 614/1217) in exchange for the position of chief minister, *wazīr*.[58] While the authors and compilers of the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* extend the genealogy of the family back in time by providing information about the ancestors of Muḥammad b. al-Mufaḍḍal, for the early modern descendants of the Banū al-Wazīr family identity coalesced around the seventh / thirteenth century. In that period a sectarian movement in Zaydism, the Muṭarrifīya, centered around one of the seats of the Banū al-Wazīr, a *hijra* called Waqash, and became a dangerous enemy of the imamate.[59] The Banū al-

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[57] ʿAbdallāh al-Wazīr was at the center of the plot to remove the Ḥamīd al-Dīn imams out of power. He headed the coup and the state for a short period until he was overthrown by the son of the imam, Aḥmad. Gregory D. Johnsen, "A Century of Upheaval: The Fall of the Imāmate and the Rise of the Hūthīs in Yemen, 1904–2014" (Ph.D., United States -- New Jersey, Princeton University, 2017), 29-32, 39-66, https://search.proquest.com/docview/1925249956/abstract/F9C2117896141DDPQ/1. Gabriele vom Bruck did extensive research into the modern life of the Banū al-Wazīr and other notable sayyid families. In her *Islam, Memory, and Morality in Yemen* she provides a list of members of the family who lived in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with their occupations. vom Bruck, 260–68. She analyzes the effects of the 1948 coup on the fates of the family of ʿAbdallāh al-Wazīr, especially its female members, in another publication: Gabriele Vom Bruck, *Mirrored Loss: A Yemeni Woman's Life Story* (London: Hurst & Company, 2018).

[58] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 4, p. 369. Wilmers, *Beyond Schools: Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Wazīr's (d. 840/1436) Epistemology of Ambiguity*, 17 n.10. This story is also mentioned in the *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr* NF C.35.ar, ff. 63b-65b. The author of the *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr* writes of Muḥammad b. al-Mufaḍḍal b. Ḥajjāj as a *muḥtasib* and even provides him with a regal title – al-Muntaṣir billāh al-ʿafīf. The author also remarks that Muḥammad b. al-Mufaḍḍal did not have a high opinion about imam al-Manṣūr ʿAbdallāh due to the latter's young age. He said allegedly that "there is no good in the imamate of a young man" (*la khayr fī imāmat ṣabī*). This remark complicates the story of the surrender of his claim to the imamate to imam al-Manṣūr. *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, f. 72a.

[59] *Hijra*, or refuge, is a location in tribal territory that received special protection and could become the place of residence of scholars and sayyids who were not members of the local tribes.

Wazīr found themselves divided between supporters or leaders of the Muṭarrifīya and champions of the imams.[60] Overcoming this division was a great effort for the family, resulting in the loss of the family seat in Waqash which was razed to the ground by imam al-Manṣūr ʿAbdallāh b. Ḥamza in 613/1216. The trauma of this loss resulted in a long feud with the descendants of this imam and his brothers, collectively known as the Āl al-Ḥamza.[61]

A branch of the Banū al-Wazīr claimed the title of imams and established a form of dynasty in Ṣanʿāʾ. In a unique case of patrilineal transmission of rule, control over the city was passed from imam al-Mahdī ʿAlī b. Muḥammad (d. 774/1373) to imam al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAlī (d. 793/1391), then to imam al-Manṣūr ʿAlī b. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (d. 840/1436-37) and finally to imam al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. ʿAlī (d.?).[62] The end of the rule of this branch of the Banū al-Wazīr coincides with the Ṭahirid expansion in the second half of the fifteenth century. They were redeemed in a way during the rise of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate, as imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn was a distant relative of the Banū al-Wazīr. While mentions of the Banū al-Wazīr proper start to disappear in the post-Sharaf al-Dīn period, the branch of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn continued to maintain special positions in Thulā and Kawkabān.

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[60] On the Muṭarrifīya see Johann Heiss and Eirik Hovden, "Competing Visions of Community in Mediaeval Zaydī Yemen," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 59, no. 3 (2016): 366–407.

[61] Ismāʿīl b. ʿAlī al-Akwaʿ, *Hijar al-ʿilm wa-maʿāqiluhu fī-l-Yaman* (Beirut, Damascus: Dār al-fikr al-muʿāṣir / Dār al-Fikr, 1416), vol. 4, pp. 2345–2346. Most recently the history of the destruction of Waqash has become the subject of an eponymous novel by the Yemeni writer Walīd Aḥmad Dammāj.

[62] As was remarked earlier, not all of these imams were actually recognized as such. The biographer of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn in his exposé on the ancestors of the imam went even further remarking that these two imams did not really qualify for the status. (al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām,* NF A.3.ar, f. 9a) The last two imams of this micro-dynasty are not recognized by the majority of sources, a notable exception being the genealogy in *Rawḍat al-albāb* that lists all four. *Rawḍat al-albāb,* NF B.18.ar, f. 29b.

In the Ṣaʿda region, the Āl al-Muʾayyad had their own claims to the imamate. The family took its name from al-Muʾayyad Aḥmad, who was the father of the first imam of this line, al-Hādī ʿAlī b. al-Muʾayyad (d. 736/1336). The power of the clan in Ṣaʿda, the great northern Yemeni city associated with the origins of the Zaydi imamate in Yemen, was consolidated during the imamate of imam al-Hādī ʿIzz al-Dīn b. al-Ḥasan (d. 900/1495) and his son imam al-Nāṣir al-Ḥasan b. imam ʿIzz al-Dīn (d. 929/1523). It took until the conquest of Ṣaʿda in 940/1534 by imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn for the family to relinquish their claims for the imamate. During the tumultuous Ottoman century in Yemen, another member of the Āl al-Muʾayyad, al-Nāṣir Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Dāwūd (d. 1024/1615), a great-grandson of imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan b. al-imām ʿIzz al-Dīn, called for the imamate to oppose the Ottomans. His uprising was stifled, and the unfortunate imam spent the rest of his life in the Istanbul Yedikule prison. No other members of Āl al-Muʾayyad called for the imamate after him. Despite this fiasco, the family retained their strong positions in Ṣaʿda.[63]

Finally, the Āl al-Ḥamza, also known as the Ḥamzīyūn or Ḥamazāt, held sway **in the Jawf region**. Wādī Jawf is located to the north-east of Ṣanʿāʾ and borders on the Empty Quarter. Despite its close proximity to the desert, it is an agriculturally rich region.[64] The eponymous ancestor of the family, Ḥamza, was the father of the great imam of the family, imam al-Manṣūr ʿAbdallāh b. Ḥamza (d. 614/1217). The Āl al-Ḥamza kept their stronghold in the Jawf region from the days of his imamate. However, they failed to establish a closer connection to other sayyid families of Zaydi

[63] I had not been able to find any works on the later history of the family. Descendants of Āl al-Muʾayyad seem to have kept a low profile in the Qasimid period. In modern Yemen, at least some of the family members engage in the preservation and publication of the works of their illustrious ancestors. See for example ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥusayn Shāyim al-Muʾayyadī, ed., *Majmūʿ rasāʾil wa fatāwā al-imām al-Hādī ʿIzz al-Dīn b. al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. al-Muʾayyad ʿalayhi al-salām [845-900]*, 2 vols. (Ṣanʿāʾ: Muʾassasat al-imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-thaqāfīya, 2008).
[64] al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 1, pp. 373–75.

Yemen. We encountered earlier a member of this family who was denied the hand of a *sharīfa* of the Banū al-Wazīr. In one instance, however, the Banū al-Wazīr tried to rewrite the history of their relations with this sayyid clan. In al-ʿUlufī's version of the *sīra* of imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn the author claims that a conveniently extinct branch of the Āl al-Ḥamza, the ʿIyāl Yaḥyā, were ancestors of the imam through a maternal grandmother. This version of the imam's genealogy did not make it into the revised biography by his great-grandson Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal and it is already questioned in the marginalia of the only surviving copy of this *sīra*.[65] However, this was a notable recognition of the importance of the Āl al-Ḥamza in the imam's network. This was due to the special relationship that the family forged with the tribal confederation of Hamdān in the Jawf region and the way in which it navigated the Ismāʿīli challenge in the region. Currently descendants of the family reside in different areas of northern Yemen.[66]

In the Ottoman and early Qasimid period, the Ḥamazāt were still controlling the Jawf, while the Āl al-Muʾayyad still claimed the Ṣaʿda region. The most powerful branches of the Banū al-Wazīr, the Āl Shams al-Dīn and the Āl al-Muṭahhar, both consisting of descendants of imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, took over control of the areas near Ṣanʿāʾ that used to be dominated by the Banū al-Wazīr. Their seat was located in Kawkabān and Thulā, two strategically located fortresses near Ṣanʿāʾ. It is thus clear that the methods that these three clans employed to maintain their control of their lands were effective. To this end, they employed several strategies: participation in administration (whether Zaydi or non-Zaydi), building networks, accumulating and redistributing wealth. Let us consider these three strategies in more detail.

[65] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām,* NF A.3.ar, ff. 2b-3b and marginalia on the same pages.
[66] al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 1, pp. 504–505.

Participation in administration

The Zaydi state in Yemen in the pre-Sharaf al-Dīn period was unstable. This had an effect on what sayyids who took up positions in the administration could achieve for their family. The geography and social structure of Yemen (the existence of numerous settled tribes with a penchant for self-governing and a deep respect for the sayyids in difficult to access localities) created obstacles for state centralization. These same factors, however, provided sayyids with unique opportunities to convert their administrative appointments into local quasi-independent statelets.

Three types of officials stand out in the system of provincial rule under the Zaydi imams: the *amīr,* the *ʿāmil,* and the *qāḍī.* The *amīr* was a kind of governor also responsible for military affairs. This title is usually reserved for sayyids fulfilling such tasks. Until the Ottoman period this position was not open to non-sayyids, which was not the case with the financial officer (*ʿāmil*) responsible for tax collection and the judge (*qāḍī)*.[67] As for the *qāḍī,* it seems that the position was not often held by sayyids (we will discuss it in chapter 5).[68] Other appointments that could be held by sayyids were secretaries (*kātib*), and propagandists of the imamate (*dāʿī*).

Amīr

Who were the sayyids who became amīrs in the pre-Ottoman Zaydi state and what were their functions? The *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* and the *sīras* of imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn point us to several possibilities. Firstly, *amīr* was a title held by ambitious sons of Zaydi imams

[67] *ʿĀmil* stood for governor in the earlier periods, however, it soon came to denote a financial official across the Islamic world. *Amīr* is a military-administrative title with a fluid meaning that changes over the course of history and from region to region. See: A. A. Duri, "Amīr," in *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2012. In Zaydi Yemen this title was reserved for sayyids holding leadership positions, especially sons of imams.

[68] I had not been able to find a sayyid in the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* who also held the title *qāḍī.*

who were hoping to pass on their rule dynastically. This is, for instance, the title used by the sons of imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, Muṭahhar and Shams al-Dīn, during the imamate of their father. Relatedly, the title of *amīr* was used by opponents of certain imams, especially those who did not receive wide recognition.

Of the three sayyid clans discussed above, the Āl al-Ḥamza seem one that uses the title *amīr* consistently. The genealogical tables of the *Rawḍat al-albāb* mark some members of this family with this title and these attributions can be confirmed through sources coming from the Āl al-Ḥamza milieu. For instance, one of the Ḥamazāt was the patron of a manuscript copy of a work by imam al-Manṣūr ʿAbdallāh b. Ḥamza (Biblioteca Ambrosiana NF F.257.ar). His title is given in the patronage note from 1010/1602 as *al-amīr al-shahīr al-kabīr al-khaṭīr jamāl al-dīn* ʿAlī b. Muṭahhar b. al-Shawīʿ.[69] Indeed, this title is also confirmed in *Rawḍat al-albāb,* a source that bestows the title sparingly.[70] We could certainly speculate that this is a later occurrence and that the title has closer links to the Ottoman presence, as the sayyid in question was a recognized Ottoman official as governor of al-Ẓāhir, a region in the Jawf.[71]

However, there are other instances where the title *amīr* and especially *amīr kabīr* seem a set term of the pre-Ottoman period, denoting powerful sayyids in control of large regions. It is also possible that the compilers of the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* borrowed this designation from official correspondence formulae to elevate the status of associated members of the family. Several of those "great" amīrs are only known by their names and their links to the family through marriage. For example, we only know about amīr Yaḥyā b. Aḥmad b. ʿAyshān that his daughter married a

[69] NF F.257.ar, f. 171a.
[70] *Rawḍat al-albāb*, NF B.18.ar, f. 34a.
[71] Al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 477, f. 58; al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, ff. 129a, 135a, 147b, 171a.

scholar from the Banū al-Wazīr and that he was married to a woman from the same family.[72] In the text, this amīr was not even linked to any particular geographical location.[73] In another example, sayyid Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad is briefly identified as the lord (*ṣāḥib*) of al-Rukūb, a location on the Dhamār plain. It is therefore difficult to judge at this point, without additional confirmation from other sources, whether these amīrs actually had those titles or whether the family historians overstated their titles in order to boost the status of the Banū al-Wazīr.

In other cases, there is more clarity. One of the founders of the Banū al-Wazīr was *amīr kabīr* al-Murtaḍā b. Mufaḍḍal b. Manṣūr. He lived in the time of imam al-Mahdī Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn (d. 656/1258) and his wars against the Ismāʿīlīs and held the position of governor (*wālī*) of Ānis and Ḥuḍūr, tribal areas located on the strategic route from southern Yemen, in particular Aden, to the Dhamār plain. He is one of the few amīrs whom we encounter in the sources whose title actually corresponds to an administrative position. His own high status seems to have been built on the special status of his father, the unofficial ruler of Waqash. Mufaḍḍal b. Manṣūr controlled some affairs of the city (*naẓara fī umūr*), but there is no confirmation that he was in any way officially appointed to do that. He was also the local notary and scribe.[74] The respect for him as an educated sayyid and the recognition of his leadership, however, extended into other, less mundane spheres.

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[72] *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, f. 28a. There are traces of the ʿAyshān family in the sources that seem to indicate that other members of the family also held the title of *amīr.* There is mention of a daughter of amīr Dāwud b. Muḥammad b. ʿAyshān, also married into the Banū al-Wazīr. *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, f. 32b. The mother of imam imam al-Hādī ʿIzz al-Dīn b. Ḥasan al-Muʾayyadī was a descendant of the ʿAyshān family. al-Muʾayyadī, *Majmūʿ rasāʾil wa fatāwā al-imām al-Hādī ʿIzz al-Dīn b. al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. al-Muʾayyad ʿalayhi al-salām [845-900]*, vol. 1, p. 25. The clan ʿAyshān was so called after the location where they resided. Its members were part of the larger Āl al-Ḥamza. al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 2, p. 1154. This relation might be the main reason why the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* is quiet about them.

[73] The sayyid was probably located in the area near Ḥūth, north of Ṣanʿāʾ. On the reason for the silence of the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* see pervious footnote.

[74] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 72a, 88b.

In one case, the people of Shaẓab asked him to pray for rain (*istisqāʾ*).[75] This request to the sayyid was a recognition of his special status in the community – as an educated and pious person, a descendant of the Prophet, and as a leader with the capability of organizing the event. This was a sort of request that a Zaydi imam could expect to have to fulfill as well.

ʿĀmil and keeper of the treasury (bayt al-māl)

Examples of *ʿummāl* (pl. of *ʿāmil*) in the sense of tax collector were not numerous among the sayyids.[76] From the time of imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn we know of two sayyid-*ʿāmil*s. One was appointed to the Ṣanʿāʾ region, sayyid Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. Ibrāhīm al-Daylamī al-Fathī.[77] The other sayyid, al-Nāṣir b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad of the Āl al-Wazīr (d. 924/1518), had the appointment of overseers of *ʿummāl* in the tribal areas of Shaẓab, Hanūm and Ḥajūr.[78] Given the scanty evidence, it is hard to state that sayyids were precluded from holding such position officially. The matter is complicated by the fact that *ʿāmil* in the Zaydi Yemeni

[75] The historians were confused by the request since, they claimed, there was no evidence that the sayyid resided in Shaẓab. The issue seems to be that such rain prayer requests would normally be issued to a sayyid living in a particular area. The authors then concluded that he must have resided in Shaẓab. *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, f. 60b: *dalla hādhā al-kalām ʿalā anna Mufaḍḍal b. Manṣūr kān yaskun Shaẓaban.*

[76] One of the earliest Zaydi Yemeni documents addressing a *ʿāmil* dates to the days of the first Yemeni Zaydi imam al-Hādī ilā-l-ḥaqq Yaḥyā b. Ḥusayn, however, it does not mention the name of the addressee. See Cornelis van Arendonk, *De opkomst van het Zaidietische imamaat in Yemen*, vol. 5, Uitgaven van de "De Goeje-Stichting" (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1919), 123–25.

[77] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām,* NF A.3.ar, ff. 250b-251a. This sayyid's family was tied to the Banū al-Wazīr through marriage since the days of their eponymous ancestor, imam al-Nāṣīr Abū-l-Fatḥ al-Daylamī (d. 444/1052-53). In particular, we know of the great-grandfather of sayyid Muḥammad al-Daylamī, whose daughter married a scion of the Banū al-Wazīr. *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 35a-36a. This sayyid seems to have read a version of the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* since the copyist of NF C.35.ar reproduces a note left in the *aṣl* by him (*bi-khaṭṭ sayydī*). *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, f. 49a.

[78] al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām,* NF A.3.ar, f. 93b-94a; *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* NF C.35.ar f. 40a, NF D.556.ar ff. 85b-86a.

context was interchangeable with *wālī,* i.e., governor (this is particularly the case in the Qasimid period, and we will address it in the last section of this chapter). In the pre-Ottoman period, however, *ʿāmil* seems to be consistently used as a designation for tax collector (sources seem to also use in this context the phrase *qadḍ al-wājibāt,* collection of taxes).[79] In light of this, it is more probable that we simply have insufficient examples of sayyids holding the title of *ʿāmil,* than that sayyids were excluded from financial affairs. Indeed, we find many examples of sayyids-financial administrators, both appointed by the imam and "self-appointed".

Before the arrival of the Ottomans the responsibility of safe-keeping the local treasuries (*buyūt al-amwāl*) was often entrusted to the sayyids. This might be due to the fact that such a task involved two prerequisites: trust and literacy. As descendants of the Prophet, the sayyids had the trust of the local population. As literate people, they were able to run the accounting. The *bayt al-māl* in Yemen was mainly a granary into which the crops collected as tax were held.[80] Evidence points to the fact that this task was considered prestigious and occasionally was a training path for future imams. For instance, Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn in 908-910/1503-1505, before becoming an imam, was an appointed official of imam al-Manṣūr Muḥammad al-Sirājī in Ẓafīr in the Ḥajja region.[81] Among his responsibilities was the yearly collection of taxes and inspection of the *buyūt al-amwāl.* The imam had to check the amount of grain preserved in the underground silos, the

[79] See for example the description of the responsibilities of al-Nāṣir b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad (*tawallā qabḍ al-wājibāt*) in *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, f. 40a and al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām,* NF A.3.ar, ff. 93b-94a.
[80] Brinkley M. Messick, "Property and the Private in a Sharia System," *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 729.
[81] The choice of Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn for this post is not coincidental. Imam al-Manṣūr Muḥammad al-Sirājī seems to have had issues consolidating the elite by his side; during his imamate, the Āl al-Muʾayyad of Ṣaʿda too claimed the imamate. The imam fell on the support of the Banū al-Wazīr of Ṣanʿāʾ: he and his brother married into the family.

madfan.[82] We know of this responsibility of the sayyid due to a miracle that occurred during this time.[83]

When Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn became imam, he continued the tradition of sayyid appointments to this position. Among the sayyids who collected taxes and safeguarded treasuries were his distant relatives from the Banū al-Wazīr, Aḥmad b. Ṣalāḥ b. ʿAlī, and his great-uncles, the brothers al-Muntaṣir b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad and al-Nāṣir b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad.[84] The two *ʿāmil*s of the imam, mentioned earlier, were also from the Banū al-Wazīr, which confirms the close links between the imam and this sayyid clan. One lesson that imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn learned from his years as the appointee of the imam was that it was risky to trust highly educated charismatic sayyids like himself with such responsible posts. His appointees were from less prominent branches of the family. For instance, the brothers al-Muntaṣir and al-Nāṣir, even though educated in several Islamic sciences, were the sons of a sayyid who did not dedicate himself to scholarship; their ancestors were known not for their scholarship but for their poetic gifts.[85] Because of this combination of factors – an education with an absence of a prominent family background – they were given wide responsibilities in several regions (Shaẓab, Ḥajūr) and oversaw the work of other appointees of the imam.

Aside from official appointments by the imam, sources provide numerous records of sayyids managing finances by "self-appointment". This usually happened in areas, where the family was residing and to some extent depended on the size of the clan and the presence of family waqfs.

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[82] Weir, *A Tribal Order: Politics and Law in the Mountains of Yemen*, 15, 232.
[83] A *madfan* upon inspection turned out to contain more grain than was initially put in it. Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām,* NF A.3.ar, ff. 77a-77b.
[84] Aḥmad b. Ṣalāḥ: *tawallā qabḍ buyūt al-amwāl wa-l-zakawāt, Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, ff. 86b, 102b. al-Muntaṣir b. Yaḥyā and al-Nāṣir b. Yaḥyā: *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, f. 40a; al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām,* NF A.3.ar, ff. 93b-94a.
[85] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 39a-40a.

A pre-Ottoman case illustrates this point. In Dhamār in the days of imam imam al-Manṣūr ʿAlī b. al-imām al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ the descendants of al-Murtaḍā b. Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā b. Manṣūr were more important than the people appointed by the imam. Because they were numerous and powerful, when the *ʿāmil* of the imam, shaykh Yaḥyā b. al-Hanna, came to the town, they beat him up, ostensibly for interfering into the way they managed local affairs.[86] The power of sayyids was even more visible in the Yemeni *hijra*s. The Banū al-Wazīr, for instance, managed the finances of the mosques of Waqash for several generations.[87] Taking this into consideration, it is no surprise that a centrally administered system of tax collection took a long time to appear in the Zaydi lands.

Dāʿī

Separately from these conventional administrative functions stands the role of sayyids in the spread of the call to the imamate (*daʿwā*). The *dāʿī* was not a Zaydi invention, but the position of such propagandist of the imamate is different from, for example, the Ismāʿilis, because the Zaydi *daʿwā* was never a secret event. Initially, I thought that the *dāʿī*s were "scouts" who checked for the potential candidate to the imamate whether there was enough support. I assumed that they operated before the candidate actually proclaimed his imamate. As it turns out, the *dāʿī* would usually start his work after the imam achieved some recognition and received some oaths of allegiance. To add confusion, the term *dāʿī* was used to designate a claimant of the imamate who, in the eyes of the speaker, did not meet the requirements for the imamate.[88]

[86] *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, f. 86b.
[87] *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, ff. 102a-102b, 104a.
[88] It is in this manner that the Ottoman amīr Sinān designated imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim b. Muḥammad in 1007/1598-99, demonstrating an impressive understanding of the subtleties of Zaydi political thinking. al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 147b. It is also how imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn described his opponent, the Ṣaʿda-based imam imam

The position of *dāʿī* required educated, charismatic people with a strong network of connections in the regions where they were promoting the imam. Imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn benefited from a powerful network of *dāʿīs,* most of them from different branches of the Banū al-Wazīr, during his call for the imamate between 910/1505 and 913/1507. Five sayyids stand out in this group. Two of them are the brothers al-Nāṣir and al-Muntaṣir mentioned earlier. They spread the message of Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's imamate in Shaẓab, and, unsurprisingly, this was also the area where they were appointed as officials of the new imam. Their connections in the area stemmed from al-Nāṣir's appointment from 908/1503 as *qāḍī*.[89] Muḥammad b. al-Muntaṣir b. Muḥammad was the *dāʿī* of the imam in Ānis.[90] In addition, he penned the text of the *daʿwā* for the imam on 9 Jumādā al-awwal 912/September 27 1506.[91] This was not coincidental. His ancestor Qāsim b. Yūsuf of the Banū al-Wazīr was deeply rooted in Ānis where he promoted the imamate of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. ʿAlī. The fact that this sayyid could take up the task of promoting the imamate of his relative Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn in this region confirms the existence of long-term connections established by his family in the region, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Sayyid Shams al-Dīn b. Muḥammad b. Ṣalāḥ performed the tasks of a *dāʿī* for the imam in al-Sharafayn.[92] He was the lord (*ṣāḥib*) of al-Dhanūb, now a village, in the al-Sharafayn area, which facilitated his mission.[93]

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al-Nāṣir al-Ḥasan b. imam ʿIzz al-Dīn or his son Majd al-Dīn. In letter to *qāḍī* Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Ḥābis*,* undated, NF A.26.ar, f. 95a.

[89] al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām,* NF A.3.ar, ff. 93b-94a.

[90] al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām,* NF A.3.ar, f. 94a.

[91] Al-ʿUlufī uses the term *anshaʾa* which indicates that the sayyid was conversant in the bureaucratic writing styles. His writing was so good that the imam did not amend anything in the text (*kān al-sayyid Muḥammad b. al-Muntaṣir anshaʾa daʿwā li-mawlānā... famā istaḥsanahā al-imām*). Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 100b.

[92] al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 93b. Al-Sharafayn is an area between the towns of Shahāra and Ḥajja, to the east of Tihāma.

[93] al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 1, p. 652.

The work of these *dāʿīs,* all of them educated sayyids with strong local ties, rendered the message effective, and the imam gained a secure foothold in those areas. He was, however, one of the last imams to rely on sayyids, and especially sayyids from his own extended clan, for the promotion of his imamate. After the Ottoman conquests, when imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim b. Muḥammad started to spread information about his imamate, he relied on a network of non-sayyid scholars. This was partly due to the fact that he did not have a rich, long established sayyid clan behind him, and partly due to the close alliances established between many sayyid families and the Ottomans in Yemen discussed further in this chapter that made them undesirable allies.

How appointments affected the family

Having investigated the positions that sayyids held in the administration of the Zaydi state, let us now weigh the effect of these appointment on the fates of their families. We will do so by analyzing the fates of their descendants.

Firstly, let us consider the descendants of the amīrs that we encountered in this section. Amīr al-Murtaḍā b. Mufaḍḍal b. Manṣūr was successful in transferring his political status to his descendants. As far as can be reconstructed from the patchy historical narratives, his family continued to reside in Ānis and commanded authority there for several generations. The politics of imam al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Muḥammad in Ānis forced some of the grandchildren of this sayyid to relocate to other places. One of the supporters of the imam from this family, Qāsim b. Yūsuf b. al-Murtaḍā b. Mufaḍḍal, was killed in Ānis by a local tribe, the Banū al-Rawīya in retribution for a punitive expedition of the imam. Despite this setback, this branch of the Banū al-Wazīr succeeded in two things: in preserving their special status in the region and in accumulating sufficient political capital across generations to put forward two imams – imam al-Mahdī Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā

and his grandson imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn. In addition, it is among the descendants of this line that we find a *dāʿī* of imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Shams al-Dīn, sayyid Muḥammad b. al-Muntaṣir b. Muḥammad. These are the some of the success stories of the family, but a majority of the descendants of al-Murtaḍā b. Mufaḍḍal are only mentioned by name and do not receive any description in the sources.[94] If we consider all the biographies, we see high rates of mortality among children, the devastating effects of wars and several plagues (840/1437 and 933/1527), and low chances of reaching a higher status than one's ancestors – and this in a family that was well-placed in Zaydi Yemen.

Another branch of the Banū al-Wazīr, known by their family name Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil, also had a successful cumulative career as local rulers during the ninth / fifteenth century. They started out as followers of the Ṣanʿāʾ imams, and their appointees to the Dhamār region.[95] However, like their relatives discussed above, they encountered hostility from the local tribes, and as the family residence was under attack, they shifted their attention northwards. The family started to behave like a quasi-dynasty, transferring leadership among themselves and steadily moving away from their dependence on the imams for appointments. Finally, a scion of this family, Yaḥyā b. Ṣalāḥ (d. 908/1503), became the ruler of Ṣaʿda, but this was a difficult time, as the Āl al-Muʾayyad were pushing to control the city. After some skirmishes the sayyid was forced to relocate to Ṣanʿāʾ where he resided among his extensive properties, among them villages, houses, and gardens.[96] Another scion of this branch was amīr ʿAbdallāh b. Yaḥyā b. Ṣalāh Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil, who was twice arrested for plotting by imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn. While his line was only

[94] This is an approximation based on the biographical data from the *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr.*
[95] Muḥammad b. Abī al-Faḍāʾil held appointments in Dhamār and Jahrān during the imamate of imam al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Muḥammad and his son imam al-Manṣūr ʿAlī until he was killed by a local tribe. *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, f. 80a-80b.
[96] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 42a, 79a, 80b.

continued through his granddaughters, the Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil remained part of the larger Banū al-Wazīr and, thus, survived.[97]

The financial administrators, for example, the brothers al-Muntaṣir and al-Nāṣir, the *ʿāmil*s of imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn were not successful at transferring their achievements to the next generation because of the 933/1526-27 plague. Another *ʿāmil* of the same imam, Aḥmad b. Ṣalāḥ b. ʿAlī did not marry well. His wife, though of sayyid descent, came from a branch of Banū al-Wazīr that downshifted towards agriculture.[98] No children are mentioned in the sources. It is quite possible that this family too perished in the 933/1526-27 plague. Finally, there is the Banū al-Daylamī, whose representative Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. Ibrāhīm was a *ʿāmil* for imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn. While we do not have information about his direct descendants, the Banū al-Daylamī remained an important scholarly family in Yemen until modern times. Al-Maqḥafī lists several members of the family who were prominent in the last decades of the Ḥamīd al-Dīn imamate.[99]

To conclude our survey of the influence of taking appointments on the family let us consider the case of the two *dāʿī*s. Of Muḥammad b. al-Muntaṣir b. Muḥammad's descendants little is known. He came from a big family; however, we know little aside their names in the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr*.[100] One of his descendants studied with the Qasimid *qāḍī* Aḥmad b. Saʿd al-Dīn al-Maswarī in 1067/1657. This descendant also owned the manuscript of the book that he studied

[97] Mentions of descendants of this branch of the family can be found in ʿUthmān b. ʿAlī al-Wazīr, *Aṭrāf al-silsila allatī hiya bi-aktāf al-nubuwwa wa-l-wilāya,* NF C. 35.ar, ff. 93a-100b.
[98] *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, ff. 86b, 102b. The reasons for the downshifting of the father of this woman is unclear; he was the son of a Ṣanʿāʾ based sayyid and a daughter of a silk merchant. *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, f. 49a
[99] al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 1, pp. 636–37. The family also owned manuscripts such as NF C.217.ar, NF E.97.ar, NF F.50.ar, NF F.187.ar, and NF F.221.ar.
[100] *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 88b-89b.

with this judge.[101] As for the second *dāʿī* of the imam, Shams al-Dīn b. Muḥammad b. Ṣalāḥ al-Hādawī, I have not been able to trace him so far. He might be a member of the Banū al-Wazīr, or he might be a sayyid from a different family.

A consideration of the biographies of the descendants of these sayyids demonstrates that the strategy of holding an official military-administrative appointment, especially that of governor, *amīr*, in the pre-Ottoman period was an effective way of rooting a sayyid family in a particular location. This was less true for appointments involving financial responsibilities or even for the propagandist position of a *dāʿī*. As amīrs and as scholars performing administrative duties, sayyid were well placed to tap into economic resources to expand their wealth and establish a prestigious status for their families. It was not easy, however, to transfer status between generations. The sampled biographies of members of the Banū al-Wazīr show that few were lucky enough to have a family and even fewer were prominent enough to be mentioned in the family history. Therefore, sayyids relied on strategies that expanded their networks, so that in each generation a larger pool of candidates could vie for higher social roles, and so that there was more support for those struggling to maintain the gains of the past.

Building networks

The successful transfer of achievements between generations depended on multiple factors, among them the survival of a large group of offspring and the maintenance of social status and access to privileges. In the pre-modern period, the Zaydi sayyids could achieve these goals if they worked to expand the outreach of their family. In this section we will consider two networking tools: marriage and local activities, such as charity, often led by women.

[101] *Samāʿ* from the qāḍī dated 1067/1657 and note of ownership: NF E.17.ar, f. 3a.

Marriage once again

One obvious way in which both men and women contributed to the expansion of the social networks of the family was marriage. Marriage was, as was shown earlier, an opportunity for the family to create closer links with non-sayyid families that they saw as strategically useful for their political project. This is particularly visible in the early life of the then not yet imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn.[102] Sources speak of ten wives of the imam. He is the Zaydi sayyid with the highest number of wives from the pre-Ottoman period that I know of. To contrast, out of the 113 men whose wives are mentioned in the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* only ten, aside from imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, have more than two wives mentioned in their biographies, and he is the only person mentioned in the family history who had more than four marriages.[103]

We will focus here on those women whom he married before he claimed the imamate in 913/1507. Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn showed his political ambitions early on by marrying Fāṭima bint ʿAbdallāh, the granddaughter of imam al-Muṭahhar b. Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Ḥamzī (d. 904/1499). Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn himself claimed descent from this imam through his mother, and from another imam, al-Mahdī Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. al-Murtaḍā (d. 840/1437) through his father. The marriage thus had all the traits of a dynastic union. It placed him at the center of Zaydi networks and created opportunities for a future political bid. Unfortunately, the union was not meant

[102] Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn was included in the history of the Banū al-Wazīr as one of their members, however, his genealogy was not without debatable details. For instance, al-ʿUlufī in his *sīra* of the imam claimed that he had links to the Āl al-Ḥamza, descendants of imam ʿAbdallāh b. Ḥamza and his brothers. This claim was debunked in the marginal notes of this version of the biography and does not reappear in later biographies, such as Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal's *al-Sulūk al-dhahabīya,* however, it is, however, a telling sign of fluid approaches to genealogy among the sayyids in the pre-Ottoman period. Al-ʿUlufī, *Sirat al-imām,* NF A.3.ar, f. 4a and marginal notes.
[103] It is certainly possible that not all wives were mentioned.

to last; when in 910/1505 Ṣanʿāʾ fell to ʿĀmir b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, the Tahirid ruler, the imam failed to save his wife from imprisonment. She and their first-born son died the same year. Due to the image that the biographers of the imam create in the sources we might mistakenly think that Fāṭima, quite possibly the imam's most beloved wife, was also his only wife in this early period.[104] This is, however, untrue.

Already in the 910s/1510s Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn seems to have been married to three other women: one *sharīfa* from the Banū al-Wazīr, Fāṭima bint ʿAlī b. Ṣalāḥ b. al-Mukhtār, and two free women of tribal descent – Tāj al-Bahāʾ bint al-shaykh Shams al-Dīn (d. 923/1517) and Tāja bint Ṣāliḥ Ibn al-Malāḥī (d. 933/1527). Fāṭima bint ʿAlī b. Ṣalāḥ b. al-Mukhtār connected the imam to the power networks of a branch of the Banū al-Wazīr that controlled Ṣanʿāʾ for over a century.[105] By the time he married her, she was a widow, having lost her husband Idrīs b. ʿAlī al-Sirājī, the brother of imam al-Manṣūr Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Sirāji. This marriage reinforced the links of Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn with his own clan and allowed him to gain a stronger position among the sayyids of Ṣanʿāʾ. Tāj al-Bahāʾ bint al-shaykh Shams al-Dīn and Tāja bint Ṣāliḥ Ibn al-Malāḥī were daughters of high-ranking tribal shaykhs of the Ḥajja and al-Sharaf regions. Tāj al-Bahā's father, shaykh Shams al-Dīn, was a *wālī* of imam al-Manṣūr Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Sirājī in the region of Ḥajja.[106] As for Tāja bint Ṣāliḥ, she came from al-Malāḥī, a tribe with a strong presence in al-Sharaf and Ḥajūr.[107] By marrying them the imam immersed himself in the tribal life of this region and established a connection that sustained his descendants for another century. The regions of Ḥajja, al-Sharaf and Ḥajūr remained under the control of the descendants of the imam through

[104] This image is enforced by the fact that the widower composed a *rithāʾ* in honor of his wife. Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 106b
[105] al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 74ab.
[106] al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, ff. 72a-72b, 74a.
[107] al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar ff. 74b-75a; al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 2, p. 1634.

these women, in particular the families of his sons Muṭahhar and Shams al-Dīn, both of them sons of Tāj al-Bahāʾ bint al-shaykh Shams al-Dīn. Thus, alliances through marriage, if well made, could serve the sayyid clans for long periods, legitimizing their political role in the regions of residence.

Marriages among sayyids were thus political matters. A well-prepared marriage could serve not just the family, but the imamate as a whole or at least the ambitions of one imam. In a famous case, the *sharīfa* Fāṭima bint Ibrāhīm b. ʿAlī of the Banū al-Wazīr was considering marriage after her father's death in 782/1380. Her brother al-Hādī b. Ibrāhīm b. ʿAlī (d. 822/1419), an influential scholar with connections in many areas of Yemen and the first compiler of the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* asked the imam al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad (d. 793/1391) for advice. The imam recommended turning down a seemingly promising suitor, an amīr and sayyid called Dāwūd b. Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbdallāh, the ruler of Dhayfān, a town to the north of Ṣanʿāʾ, in favor of another sayyid, al-Murtaḍā b. Abī al-Faḍāʾil b. Muḥammad.[108] The imam's advice was necessary because the marriage of Fāṭima was perceived as high-profile, of importance also to a Zaydi imam. The imam remarked that such a union was of no use either to the family, or to the suitors.[109] The imam included himself in this pronouncement, underlining that he too was part of the Banū al-Wazīr. And thus, by following the advice of the imam, the family was

[108] Dhayfān is located at the intersection of several regions – al-Bawn, Rayda and ʿAmrān, all north of Ṣanʿāʾ. This seems always to have been a region with powerful tribes, and the settlement itself boasted a fortification on an elevation that allowed it to control the plain of al-Bawn. This was a strategic geographical location. Wilson, *Gazetteer of Historical North-West Yemen*, 170. Little is known about al-Murtaḍā b. Abī al-Faḍāʾil b. Muḥammad except that he was married twice and had two sons. There is some confusion in the sources even about what exactly he was called. However, these errors are not a sign of insignificance. As far as can be distinguished, al-Murtaḍā belonged to a well-off Ṣanʿāʾ-based sayyid clan. His descendant Muḥammad b. al-Murtaḍā b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Ibn Abī al-Faḍā'il (d. 933/1527), who was a supporter of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn owned a house in the city. *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 36b-37a.

[109] *Haʾulā al-ashrāf lā yuṣliḥūn lanā wa lā nuṣliḥ lahum. Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, f. 78b.

demonstrating their close alliance with the person holding the imamate and their recognition of the strategic value of their marriages to the state.[110]

Why did the imam prefer the other sayyid to the amīr? While the *Tārīkh banū al-Wazīr* does not provide an answer, research into the genealogy of the sayyid reveals that he belonged to a branch of the Āl al-Ḥamza, rivals of imam al-Nāṣir.[111] Clearly, the imam did not believe that the marriage of a woman belonging to his allies among Banū al-Wazīr would improve his relations with this clan. This points us to an important conclusion about the enforcement of alliances and hierarchies between sayyid clans. Marriage between rival sayyid clans implied that old feuds would be set aside. We can surmise that imam al-Nāṣir did not think that this marriage would oblige the Āl al-Ḥamza to support him or he did not think he would have the power to enforce the implied alliance. Another undated episode underlines this political aspect of marriage. In this story, a sayyid of the Banū al-Wazīr, Muḥammad b. Abī Qāsim, was married to the daughter of imam Yaḥyā.[112] But the son-in-law did not support the claim of this person to the imamate (*lā yaqūl bi-imāmatihi*). The family of the imam saw this as an offence and sought to void the marriage. The sayyid had no choice but to return his wife to her family.[113] Unlike imam al-Nāṣir, imam Yaḥyā could at least enforce a divorce on a misbehaving son-in-law.

Not all descriptions of marriages that survive present the image of such well-planned affairs. A narrative pattern in the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* is the following: a sayyid passes through an area on his way to some location (usually for study), and while passing through the territory he

[110] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 36b-37a.
[111] *Rawḍat al-albāb,* NF B.18.ar, f. 34b.
[112] The episode is undated, which complicates the identification of the people involved. It most probably took place in the eight century AH / fourteenth century CE and the imam Yaḥyā mentioned in the episode could be imam al-Muʾayyad Yaḥyā b. Ḥamza b. ʿAlī (d. 750/1349).
[113] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556ar, ff. 98b, 108a; NF C.35.ar, ff. 46b, 51b.

encounters a noble person. This person, recognizing the nobility of the sayyid, suggests to him that he should marry one of his daughters, whereupon the marriage takes place without further ado. It is difficult to establish the veracity of such accounts of rushed marriages, even though the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* provides at least two examples. Sayyid Aḥmad b. Mufaḍḍal married the daughter of amīr al-Murtaḍā b. Manṣūr b. Mufaḍḍal, his paternal uncle, while passing through the area where the amīr resided.[114] It seems that he was repeating the manner in which his father, sayyid Mufaḍḍal b. Manṣūr (d. 682/1283-84) gave a daughter, Fāṭima, in marriage to sayyid Muḥammad b. Muṭahhar b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Murtaḍā, a member of another branch of the Banū al-Wazīr. The element of rush is illustrated in the second story by the fact that the bride did not have an appropriate dress (*qamīṣ*) and had to borrow one from her father for the ceremony.[115] On closer inspection both stories are about rather traditional marriages within the family itself (marriage to a cousin, marriage to a woman of a related family branch). Such stories illustrate that the men of the notable sayyid families were desired partners just by virtue of their ancestry. Their future fathers-in-law felt no need to investigate their financial status, trusting their *nasab*. On the other hand, it also demonstrates that the grooms were sufficiently satisfied by the proposed marriage and did not hesitate to take these unfamiliar women as wives. Such marriages are examples of "benefit at first sight".

Sustaining networks through local leadership

Beyond marriage strategies, sayyid families exploited additional networking opportunities in the cities and study centers (*hijra*s) that they resided in. Several of these activities – charity,

[114] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 53b.
[115] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 54ab.

teaching, maintaining relations between different branches of the family – fulfilled an important legitimizing function for sayyid rule. In urban centers we often find these functions delegated to *sharīfa*s who actively participated in socio-economic and religious life. Contemporaries and descendants, perhaps in a turn to flattery, described these women-leaders as having some of the requirements for the imamate – in particular education, piety, a liking for what we would now call public service as well as the prestigious status of descendants of the Prophet. Some of the biographies go as far as to claim that had it not been for their sex, they could have claimed the imamate.[116]

In the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* we find several examples of what I term the "woman-imam", i.e. women that led the community and took upon themselves key socio-economic responsibilities such as organizing public food distribution and taking care of orphans (including teaching them or otherwise providing for their education), setting up public events including public Qur'ān commenting (*tafsīr*) in mosques, arranging funerals and even executing wills. For example, the *sharīfa* Shams al-Jūr bint Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā, who lived in the ninth century AH / fifteenth century CE, organized her own study circle (*majlis*) in which the *ʿulamāʾ* discussed religious matters. She also ordered these scholars to provide public *tafsīr* sessions in the Masjid al-Hādī in Ṣaʿda. Finally, she distributed food and pensions to the population. Her descendant reverently wrote in her biography that these activities were not taken up by imams (the comparison being in the favor of this woman-leader).[117]

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[116] For instance, in the biography of Shams al-Jūr bint al-Hādī b. Ibrāhīm the biographer remarks: *law razaqa allāh ʿibādahu rajulan mithlahā lam yushakka fī ṣalāḥihi li-l-imāma*. *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 28ab.

[117] *... taʾamur ahl al-maʿārif bi-l-tafsīr fī masjid al-Hādī ... wa taṣnaʿ li-l-jamīʿ min al-ṭaʿām wa-l-ʿaṭāʾ wa-l-inʿām mā lā yafʿaluhu al-aʾimma al-kirām. Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, f. 80a.

In another example, the *sharīfa* Shams al-Jūr bint al-Hādī b. Ibrāhīm maintained links between different branches of the family by travelling between Ṣanʿā and Ṣaʿda. Given the geographical spread of the Banū al-Wazīr, a member of which she was, it was a necessary networking task that kept different branches of the family updated on each other's affairs. Such travels created opportunities for the negotiation of marital unions, at which Shams al-Jūr excelled.[118] Finally, she maintained the visible profile of the family by engaging in exchanges of letters with leading scholars of the time. She thus participated in a networking activity usually reserved for educated men.

Charity work was another domain in which *sharīfa*s were visible. A female relative of imam al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, unfortunately unidentifiable due to the incompleteness of the only manuscript mentioning her, was credited with constructing a mosque and a guesthouse in al-Ẓafīr where there were always enough food and beds available for those in need.[119] The same Shams al-Jūr bint al-Hādī b. Ibrāhīm we encountered earlier ran a charity by opening her house to those in need.[120] Another form of public service that women of leading sayyid clans were trusted with was teaching. As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, Dahmāʾ bint Yaḥyā, the sister of imam al-Mahdī Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā, was tasked with such work in Thulā, a major center of Zaydi learning.[121] Dahmāʾ is a good example of how close ties with a locality enhanced the possibilities for high-ranking women to access positions of power. Dahmāʾ spent all her life in Thulā; she is known to have administered several waqfs in the area and seems to have had other responsibilities (*mushtaghilāt*). Women also organized funerals, a prestigious task often undertaken by both Zaydi

[118] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff.28a-28b.
[119] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām,* NF A.3.ar ,f. 1a.
[120] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 28a-28b.
[121] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām,* NF A.3.ar, f. 6a (*qāmat bi amr al-tadrīs bi-madīnat Thulā*); her book collection along with copies of works composed by her and her brother al-Hādī was later transferred to the *khizāna* of imam al-Mahdī Aḥmad.

and non-Zaydi rulers. For example, Fāṭima bint al-imām al-Mahdī ʿAlī b. Muḥammad organized the funeral of Ibrāhīm b. ʿAlī b. al-Murtaḍā, an important Zaydi scholar from the Banū al-Wazīr. For this her biographer described her as *amīrat al-mu'mināt,* a title close to that of the Zaydi imams, *amīr al-mu'minīn.*[122]

Last but not least, there was the traditional transmission of knowledge, the ultimate method for network building. This is the aspect of sayyid participation in local life that is relatively well documented in study certificates of various kinds (*ijāza, samāʿ, qirāʾa*). However, there have been few attempts so far to link this data to the political life in Zaydi Yemen and to trace these contacts beyond the purely intellectual domain. We will analyze it in greater detail in the following chapter.

Activities such as charity work, organization of education, and other responsibilities undertaken by both the men and women of the Zaydi sayyid families can be all considered opportunities for such families to promote their public image as local rulers and to expand the network of their supporters through the distribution of benefits. However, we do not have sufficient information about the number of sayyid families engaged in work of this type and thus cannot fully reconstruct the relationship between it and the expansion of sayyid networks. It is safe to assume that some positive effect was present, and that these charitable activities expanded and strengthened the groups supporting sayyids as local rulers.

Accumulating wealth

The third method the sayyid families employed to ensure their status and guarantee their political participation was the accumulation of wealth. Wealth accumulation was closely linked to the appointments that the sayyids sought and received and to their networking strategies. However,

[122] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 38a-38b.

in comparison to the previously described two methods there seems to be less correlation between wealth and political success. This might also reflect the biases of the sources. Nevertheless, in this section we will consider the question: How did Zaydi sayyids accumulate their wealth and how was it used in their strategies for enforcing their domination in particular localities? Not all sayyids who accumulated wealth were able to expand their presence in Zaydi Yemen politically. Two examples from the lives of a father and son illustrate this point.

The life of Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Murtaḍā (757-837/1356-1434) demonstrates the possibilities that sayyids had for pursuing a fluid career. [123] Like most sayyids with some means, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad started out by getting an education. He came from a family of scholars, both his grandfather Muḥammad b. al-Murtaḍā and great-grandfather al-Murtaḍā b. al-Mufaḍḍal (d. 732/1332) were scholars, and his mother the *sharīfa* Jawzīya bint Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā was famed for her knowledge of *fiqh*.[124] Muḥammad b. Aḥmad thus had the possibility of pursuing this path. Instead, he switched to trade and became a horse merchant. One wonders how a sayyid with seemingly no connections in merchant circles could enter the lucrative horse trade that connected the political elites of Yemeni society. Given that horses were both an export item and a traditional gift in ceremonial exchanges at the highest level, one could surmise that people involved in it would not easily open up to a complete outsider.[125] Muḥammad b. Aḥmad, however, was not an outsider. His father Aḥmad b. Muḥammad was a politician, a

[123] Biography of Muḥammad b. Aḥmad: *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 29a, 38a, 41b, 47b-48a.
[124] On Muḥammad b. al-Murtaḍā: *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, ff. 98a-99a, 109b. On al-Murtaḍā b. al-Mufaḍḍal: *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, ff. 105a-110b. On Jawzīya: *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, ff. 99b-100a.
[125] Nancy Um, *Shipped but Not Sold: Material Culture and the Social Protocols of Trade during Yemen's Age of Coffee*, Perspectives on the Global Past (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017), 42–47.

representative (*nāʾib*) of imam al-Mahdī ʿAlī b. Muḥammad.[126] His high political profile put him in a place where he could connect his son with the top levels of society. Through his trade Muḥammad b. Aḥmad maintained and established the connections that allowed him to rise even further in society. He participated in the wars of the Ṣanʿāʾ imams belonging to the Banū al-Wazīr which was undoubtedly a good move for a person aspiring to *ahl al-riyāsa* status. But what seems to have fundamentally boosted his rise and transformed it into a political career was the education that he got and his good handwriting which allowed him to perform important archival tasks as *kātib* of his family (for instance, he wrote wills and maintained the registers of payments to the sayyids).[127] He was also known for his writings, especially as an author of *adab,* i.e. literary works.

The combination of a high level of literacy and an enterprising character propelled Muḥammad b. Aḥmad forward in society. He married the widow of imam al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-dīn Muḥammad (of the Ṣanʿāʾ ruling branch of the Banū al-Wazīr), Fāṭima bint al-sulṭān Ṭāhir. Fāṭima's tribal background as the daughter of a tribal shaykh of the strategic Dhamār plain placed her husband in a special position as intermediary between sayyids and tribal nobility. Following this success, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad relocated with his family to Ṣanʿāʾ, where he lived in a house known as Bayt Ibn al-Amīn and continued to exert influence in Ṣaʿda, Ṣanʿāʾ and Dhamār. The highest acknowledgment of the role of this sayyid in Zaydi society of the time comes in his characterization by his biographer as *rajul al-dawla,* a statesman. One question remains: if he was so influential, why was this sayyid not given the title of *amīr*? It seems that the origin of his prestige,

[126] Biography of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad: *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, f. 99b.
[127] *Nashr al-dafātir,* I believe, would mean in his context the documents/quires (*daftars*) containing information about payments. This might, however, be an anachronistic interpretation. Another possibility is that the term *daftar* in the meaning of financial register started to be used in Yemen in the Ottoman and Qasimid periods. At this point I do not have enough data to reach a definitive conclusion.

the horse trade, played a role in the absence of it in his biography. He was thus unable to fully replicate the career trajectory of his father, but he succeeded in establishing a stronger presence in the central regions of Yemen, Dhamār and Ṣanʿāʾ.

Muḥammad b. Aḥmad's failure to establish a political career might be the reason why he failed to pass on his high status to his son, Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad (781-832/1379-1429).[128] Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad is described in the sources as a wealthy sayyid.[129] They reveal that his wealth was not manifested in lucrative trade, but in "a continuously making available of provisions/food" (*iṭʿām al-ṭaʿām ʿalā-l-istimrār*) and a large house that he was able to extend. This allows us to venture a guess that the sayyid was a landowner, and that he happened to be lucky in his agricultural endeavors. This is an achievement in pre-modern Yemen where droughts and famines were common.[130] His wealth was considered extraordinary by his contemporaries, so they said that he enjoyed royalty-like conditions (*aḥwāl mulūkīya*). Given that we know who his father was, it is clear that much of the father's wealth was transferred to the son. He was given an education, an upbringing, but eventually failed to leave a mark on society. His greatest achievement was the fact that he was married to his cousin, the *sharīfa* Shams al-Jūr bint al-Hādī b. Ibrāhīm, one of the outstanding women-scholars of Zaydism, but all of their children died in the 840/1434 plague.

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[128] Biography of Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad: *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 28a, 48a-48b.

[129] *Lahu .. aḥwāl zāʾida ʿalā aḥwāl al-sāda min al-ʿaṭāyā wa-l-ṭaʿām. Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 28a, 48a-48b.

[130] Here is a list of years in which there were famines and price increases from a better documented period – the tenth / sixteenth century: 916/1510, 924/1518, 932/1525, 933/1526, 962-963/1554-1555, 971/1563, 983/1575. Large scale droughts and famines that affected large parts of Yemen occurred at least every decade. We can assume that smaller scale bad harvests were just as regular. Data on the famines based on: ʿĪsā Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ fī mā ḥadatha baʿd al-miʾa al-tāsiʿa min al-fitan wa-l-futūḥ*, ed. Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad al-Maqḥafī (Ṣanʿāʾ: Markaz ʿAbbādī li-l-dirāsāt wa-l-nashr, 1424); Frédérique Soudan, *Le Yémen ottoman d'après la chronique d'al-Mawzaʿī al-Iḥsān fī dukhūl mamlakat al-Yaman taḥt ẓill ʿadālat Āl ʿUṯmān*, Textes arabes et études islamiques 37 (Cairo: IFAO, 1999).

As a result of this tragedy, the family wealth seems to have been transferred to Shams al-Jūr as she is described in the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* as a woman who had significant resources (*amwāl jazīla*) and was thus able to engage in charity.[131] The patrilineal accumulation of wealth and status in this branch of the extended Banū al-Wazīr clan was interrupted, but the cumulative status of the family increased, as through the lives of these sayyids the links of the family with the area in which they were residing increased.

The accumulation of wealth alone was not a powerful enough instrument to establish a political career. It had to be combined with other strategies to reach the desired level of political involvement. Character and access to education were important factors in the advancement of sayyid control over territories. Nevertheless, any form of enterprising behavior, as long as it was sustained across generations, added to the status of the family as a whole.

Before the Ottoman conquest we thus find sayyids aiming for an expanded political presence in Yemen. As local rulers, whether appointed by other rulers or self-proclaimed, the sayyid families worked to ensure the transfer of their status to future generation. Their marriages, when it was possible, were strategic, either consolidating the unity of the family, or expanding its reach to include other important political actors. Appointments were also used as opportunities to accumulate wealth which could be more readily transferred to descendants. However, despite these efforts, the rate of success among sayyids, i.e., the chances of not just maintaining the standing of the family but advancing it, were low.

[131] Biography of Shams al-Jūr: *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, ff. 28a-28b; NF D.556.ar, ff. 61b, 66b.

The ashrāf in the Ottoman period: the Āl al-Muʾayyad and the Āl Sharaf al-Dīn

The successes and failures of the Ottomans in Yemen are closely linked to their relations with Zaydi sayyids. As Ottoman provincial rule evolved in the direction of integrating local notables in it, the position of the Ottomans in Yemen stabilized.[132] The Ottoman governors of Yemen who had longer tenure, the Yemenli Ḥasan Pasha group in particular, had a better chance of building relations of trust with the local elites, including the sayyids who received district (*sanjaq*) appointments. The Ottoman Empire thus offered local lords a method of formalization of their status and a salary in return requiring them to support a sultan whom they never saw. Allegiance to a distant sultan was a reasonable alternative to the bickering of the sayyid clans that each pushed for their own candidate to the imamate and an alternative for the ambitious sayyids that did not meet the requirements for the imamate but wanted to be recognized as leaders.[133] The collapse of this agreement under the weight of several factors (including the shifts in Ottoman decision-making, the Qasimid uprising and the resumption of internal conflicts among the sayyids, as discussed in chapter 2) contributed to the conclusion of the first period of Ottoman rule in Yemen.

The Āl Sharaf al-Dīn (the Āl Shams al-Dīn and the Āl al-Muṭahhar), the Āl al-Muʾayyad and to a lesser extent the Āl al-Ḥamza were deeply integrated into the Ottoman military-

[132] It is around this same time that the Ottomans are permitting the local dynasts, Ṭurabāys of Lajjūn in Palestine, to rule in their name. Dror Ze'evi, *An Ottoman Century. The District of Jerusalem in the 1600s.*, SUNY Series in Medieval Middle East History (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 41–43. And around this time in Ottoman Lebanon several beys of local provenance and of sectarian leanings (Druze, Shiʿī) were also allowed into the local administration ranks. Stefan Winter, *The Shiites of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule, 1516–1788*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 31–57.

[133] This was not the position held by the imams themselves. A letter exchange between the Ottoman governor and imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim, analyzed by Blukacz demonstrates how the focus on the leadership of Ahl al-Bayt precluded the Ottoman sultan from holding any political legitimacy from the Zaydi point of view. François Blukacz, "Le Yémen sous l'autorité des imams zaidites au XVIIe siècle : une éphémère unité," *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée* 67, no. 1 (1993): 41–43, https://doi.org/10.3406/remmm.1993.1586.

administrative system in the region. Thanks to their cooperation with the Ottomans, they were able to maintain control over the territories that they claimed. Due to the dependence of the Ottomans on these families, the Ottoman system in Yemen was in danger whenever internal family disagreements flared up. This was particularly the case with the extended Sharaf al-Dīn family on which the Ottomans relied in their administration of northern Yemen. The family included many ambitious sayyids and the different branches of the family easily clashed. Eventually, the conflict between the Āl Shams al-Dīn and the Āl al-Muṭahhar played a significant role in the disintegration of Ottoman rule in the region.

This section argues that the type of appointment received by the sayyids had an effect on the fates of their descendants. Some sayyids were content with "Ottoman-style" appointments that would post them to areas far from their original domains. Such sayyids were at a risk to lose their ties to the location that had been built up by their family over generations. One exception to this rule were the Āl Shams al-Dīn of Kawkabān who firmly maintained their link to Kawkabān during the Ottoman period. This is why we will analyze their case separately.

Sayyid families in the Ottoman provincial administration of Yemen

Zaydi sayyid families were taken into the Ottoman provincial administration of Yemen on different levels. The earliest record of Zaydi *ashrāf* on Ottoman payroll dates to 968/1560-61. In the financial register TSMA.d.314 an unnamed group of *ashrāf* from Ṣaʿda, Jawf and Jāzān are listed as recipients of salaries (*muwājibāt*) among other military groups in Yemen. This early cooperation with the Ottomans was further developed during the governorship of Ḥasan Pasha.

Ümerā

The Zaydi sayyids that chose to cooperate with the Ottomans usually received the title of *amīr.* Under this title (*ümerā*) we find them in the Ottoman financial reports. [134] A set of six financial reports from the governorship of Ḥasan Pasha provides some insights into the structure of the *ümerā* corps in Yemen in the first decade of the eleventh century / final decade of the sixteenth century. The period of governorship of Ḥasan Pasha in Yemen has the highest number of financial documents surviving, in particular complete documents that allow us to reconstruct the relationship between the Ottomans and the Zaydi elites. The documents from earlier periods of the Ottoman presence in Yemen focus more on payments to soldiers rather than these high-level relationships. This means that it is hard to trace the evolution of Ottoman policy towards the Yemeni Zaydi elites on the basis of surviving financial documents alone.

The *defter*s each contain a section on the yearly payments (*salyane*) of the *ümerā* from 1001/1593 to 1008/1600 and the names of the recipients. Of the top-level *ümerā* in these documents roughly half were classified as *ümerā-i vilayet-i Yemen*, i.e., the officers of Yemen, as opposed to the officers from Egypt (*ümerā-i vilayet-i Mısır*). In total across all six *defters* thirty-six people are listed as the *ümerā* of Yemen. Not all of the *ümerā-i vilayet-i Yemen* were local; in half of the cases, they were Ottoman officers who held ranks in the army of Yemen. Out of this subgroup let us focus on the identifiable Yemeni Zaydi sayyids. Of the thirty-six *ümerā* nine are identifiable Zaydi Yemeni sayyids. They belong to the three families that we encountered before. The

[134] İ. Metin Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650*, The Modern Middle East Series (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 39. Kunt describes three *müteferrika* groups from a 942-43/1535-37 register one of which included "the sons and brothers of vezirs and other officials". Those were mostly male members of the Ottoman imperial family, sons of vassal rulers and of deposed rulers. The Yemeni sayyids, especially those of the Āl Sharaf al-Dīn, could easily qualify as such. They, therefore, had a legitimate track in the Ottoman military-administrative system.

Āl Sharaf al-Dīn is represented by sayyid Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn and his son Muḥammad, as well as his cousins Ibrāhīm b. Muṭahhar, ʿAbdallāh b. Muṭahhar and ʿAbd al-Raḥīm b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muṭahhar. This means that both branches of the family worked closely with the Ottomans. The Āl al-Ḥamza is represented by Muṭahhar b. Muḥammad b. al-Shawīʿ, and the brothers Ḥasan b. Nāṣir and Wahhās b. Nāṣir. The Āl al-Muʾayyad has a single representative in the selection – Ṣalāḥ b. Aḥmad.[135] This data is confirmed in narrative sources as well. The participation of the sayyids in the Ottoman military-administrative system at such a level is a strong indicator that the Ottomans saw the need to rely on sayyids in their government. However, as the analysis of individual biographies will show, the Ottoman system could not regulate the conflicts that ensued between the sayyids.

First of all, the list of sayyids on the Ottoman payroll shows that the sayyids held no grudges against the new masters of Yemen. Each family had lost members in the wars against the Ottomans, but they chose cooperation over continued war. This is particularly the case with Ṣalāḥ b. Aḥmad of the Āl al-Muʾayyad. In 959/1552, when Özdemir Pasha was expanding his presence in Yemen, his grandfather Ḥusayn b. ʿIzz al-Dīn joined Muṭahhar b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn in the defense of Thulā. The unfortunate sayyid Ḥusayn was killed in action. This result did not prevent his son, Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn, asking Özdemir Pasha for military help the next year. Moreover, as a result of a successful campaign, in which he was joined by two people close to Özdemir (*aṣḥāb*), he was allowed to stay in the Ṣaʿda region as an Ottoman appointee. He remained there in a double appointment with a *walī* sent there by Özdemir, a certain amīr Iskandar who was instructed to collect taxes the way they were collected under sayyid Aḥmad and to respect the peace concluded between the sayyid and Özdemir. As a parting piece of advice, the Pasha told the sayyid

[135] MAD 1382, ff. 21-22; 2215, ff. 24-25; 3084, f. 26; 7092, f. 27; 7555, ff. 18-19.

to stay away from the Ottoman government.[136] Ṣalāḥ b. Aḥmad benefited from the agreements concluded between his father and the Ottomans. His appointment as an Ottoman official was confirmed during the governorship of Ḥasan Pasha. The Ottomans, however, continued to keep the Āl al-Muʾayyad at arm's length with regard to governing Ṣaʿda.

Several episodes from the life and career of Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn b. al-imām ʿIzz al-Dīn b. Ḥasan, Ṣalāḥ's first cousin once removed, illustrate this policy. Pursuing his ambitions to maintain a foothold in the Ṣaʿda region, this sayyid petitioned the Ottomans stationed in the city in 1008/1600 to be included in the *ümerā* class. The sayyid turned to a peer from the Āl al-Ḥamza, Fāriʿ b. Ḥumayḍa, to write the petition that included standard conditions that the sayyid imposed on himself: he promised he would not seek to enter Ṣaʿda or rule it. The Ottomans in addition took his brother hostage. The sayyid was taken into the *ümerā* class.[137] Eventually, as Ottoman power in the region started to disintegrate, the sayyid broke his promise and returned to the city of his ancestors. This biography illustrates the fact that the Ottomans realized the importance of curbing the ambitions of their sayyid allies and the risks entailed by their residing in one area.

The descendants of Muṭahhar b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn are another Zaydi sayyid family that set old grudges aside. After the death of Muṭahhar in 980/1572, his sons shift away from wars against the Ottomans and choose to loosely align themselves with them. The fates of the sons of Muṭahhar under Ottoman rule were changed drastically during the governorship of Ḥasan Pasha who insisted on more direct expressions of loyalty. In particular, he wanted the sons

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[136] *awṣāhu [Uzdamīr Bāshā] bi-l-iḥtirāz ʿalā nafsihi min al-dawla al-ʿuthmānīya.* Ibn al-Muʾayyad, *al-Tuḥfa al-ʿanbarīya*, NF D.451.ar, ff. 142b-143a.

[137] We only have al-Sharafī's word on this, and he claims that the sayyid was an amīr in the Ottoman system: *lahu min al-riyāsa ism al-imāra*. Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 151a.

of Muṭahhar to support his effort to curb the remaining Āl al-Muʾayyad in the Ṣaʿda region.[138] However, due to previous alliances that existed between some of the sayyids of the Āl Muṭahhar and the Āl al-Muʾayyad, notably ʿAlī Yaḥyā b. Muṭahhar and Luṭfallāh b. Muṭahhar, and due to conflicts between the brothers (especially between ʿAlī Yaḥyā and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān), they refused to participate in the campaign. The good relations with the Ottomans were severed, and after a series of armed conflicts, several brothers were captured and sent to Istanbul in 994/1586.[139] The fates of the third generation were equally divergent: while Jaʿfar b. ʿAlī Yaḥyā chose to join imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim in 1006/1598, his brother Zayd b. ʿAlī Yaḥyā held military appointments with the Ottomans and led military units of at least two hundred men into battle against the imam.[140] In this third generation of the Āl Muṭahhar, ʿAbd al-Raḥīm b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muṭahhar inherited from his father his alliance with the Ottomans and is one of those who appears in the *ümerā* section of the Ottoman financial *defter*s. He was appointed as *muwālī* to Ḥajja, the region and city where his great-grandfather imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn started his career.[141] Al-Sharafī reports that this sayyid was suspicious that his brothers, Aḥmad, Muḥammad and Muṭahhar, would push him aside in al-Sharaf and Ḥajja.[142] I have so far not been able to confirm this claim through Ottoman financial documents; they do not mention the other brothers as having the status of *ümerā,* which means that the Ottomans were not contesting the internal family hierarchy through appointments.

[138] Al-Duʿāmī, *Al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 477, f. 23.
[139] Three sons of Muṭahhar (Luṭfallāh, Ghawth al-Dīn and Ḥifẓallāh) and a grandson (Muḥammad b. al-Hādī b. Muṭahhar). Ibn al-Muʾayyad, *al-Tuḥfa al-ʿanbarīya,* NF D.451.ar, f. 145a.
[140] Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, ff. 138a (Jaʿfar b. ʿAlī Yaḥyā), 161a (Zayd b. ʿAlī Yaḥyā).
[141] Al-Sharafī, NF C.101.ar, ff. 130a-131b.
[142] Al-Sharafī, NF C.101.ar, ff. 177b-178a.

There is a detailed record of how ʿAbdallāh b. Muṭahhar became an Ottoman official during the governorship of Ḥasan Pasha. We can assume that the procedure, as it is described in the sources, is authentic since it is narrated to us by an expert eyewitness, an administrator with the pro-Ottoman Āl Shams al-Dīn, ʿĀmir al-Duʿāmī. ʿAbdallāh b. Muṭahhar, like Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Muayyadī mentioned earlier in this chapter, petitioned the Ottomans to receive an appointment. To demonstrate that his intentions were genuine, he travelled in person to Ṣanʿāʾ to the court of Ḥasan Pasha (Muḥarram 991/ February 1583). This was the first and most important step in confirmations of loyalty in Ottoman Yemen – and this is exactly what his brothers ʿAlī Yaḥyā and Luṭfallāh refused to do. The investiture took almost a month and involved public ceremonies of gift exchange, feasts and proclamations.[143] The culmination was the Pasha's announcement that the sayyid received a *sanjaq.* As a next step after the announcement, the governor sent a petition for the recognition of this appointment to Istanbul.[144] Only after this could the sayyid be recognized as part of the Ottoman system in Yemen and be entered into the *defter*s as an official and receive a salary. The salary (*jāmakīya* in the Arabic sources) of the newly minted amīr consisted of the revenues of al-Sūda and direct payments from the treasury.[145]

The Āl al-Ḥamza too fared well in the Ottoman period. Muṭahhar b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Shawīʿ (d. 1013/1604) went in person to Ṣanʿāʾ to seek an appointment with Ḥasan Pasha. He arrived in the city in 990/1582, shortly after Ḥasan Pasha settled there. For his promptness the

[143] Al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 477, ff. 61-66.
[144] Al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 477, f. 63: *anʿama [Ḥasan Pasha] ʿalayhi [ʿAbdallāh b. Muṭahhar] bihi [al-sanjaq] ... wa ʿaraḍa lahu ilā al-abwāb al-saʿīda al-sulṭānīya.* While I had not yet been able to trace a record of this petition, there are other examples of such documents in the Ottoman archives. A confirmation for a *salyāne* transfer petition from Jaʿfer Pasha on behalf of a member of Āl al-Ḥamza in 1020/1611 is one such example. A.RSK.d.1485, f. 2.
[145] Al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 477, f. 65: al-Duʿāmī writes that the payments came from *al-dīwān al-karīm* and were in cash (gold). What is implied here is probably the payments from the treasury of the governor himself.

sayyid was rewarded and received a *sanjaq*. His relatives were not disregarded either; his brothers were promised salaries (*jawāmik*), and eventually his sons too were integrated into the Ottoman system. ʿAlī b. Muṭahhar came into the Ottoman orbit in 989/1581 when he travelled in a delegation to Ḥasan Pasha who was then in Taʿizz, and by 1006/1598 he was assisting his father as *mutawallī* of al-Ẓāhir.[146] The appointment of the sayyid was to Ẓāhir Hamdān, a region where his family had long had a strong presence. This is a result of a lesson learned by the Ottomans about the difficulties of imposing distancing rules in Yemen. Previously, another member of this family, amīr Muḥammad b. Nāṣir al-Ḥamzī (d. 991/1583) joined the Ottoman side in the days of Behrām Pasha (governor of Yemen 978-983/1570-1575) and received from this governor the *sanjaq* of Radāʿ. He was expected to stay there, however, he left for his native Jawf as soon as the opportunity arose, while keeping his *sanjaq* and not receiving any punishment from the Ottomans until the governorship of Ḥasan Pasha.[147] It took the Ottomans several years to notice the defection of the sayyid and to punish him for it. Ḥasan Pasha clearly did not want to repeat his predecessors' mistakes and decided to formalize existing links. We might still wonder why Muṭahhar b. Shawīʿ chose to exhibit his loyalty to the Ottomans in a public way and to seek an appointment to an area that was already under his control. One incentive could have been financial; the Ottoman salary system, as the sayyids learned, was more secure than reliance on revenue collection. In addition, travelling to the court of the governor in person yielded an immediate increase in fortunes due to the copious amounts of gifts (robes of honor, steeds, expensive weapons etc.).[148]

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[146] Al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 477 f. 58; al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar f. 129a, 135a, 147b, 171a.
[147] Al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 477, ff. 12-17.
[148] A witness of these ceremonies, al-Duʿāmī remarked of Ibn al-Shawīʿ that he arrived at the court a poor man but left it rich [*waṣala ilayhi faqīran fa-ṣār ghanīyan*]. Al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 477, ff. 32-33.

The Banū Shawīʾ were not the only family group of the Āl al-Ḥamza that joined the Ottomans. The *defter*s note the names of two other sayyids of this clan – Ḥasan b. Nāṣir and Wahhās b. Nāṣir. So far, I have not been able to track Ḥasan b. Nāṣir down in other sources, except for a note on his death in 1020/1611 and the transfer of his *salyāne* to his brother ʿAbd al-Qādir.[149] Wahhās b. Nāṣir followed the pattern of other sayyids mentioned in this section – he travelled to the court of Ḥasan Pasha and received a *sanjaq* from him in the Jawf region.[150] In his case, once again, the Ottomans chose to formalize an already existing link between the sayyid and a territory.

The biographies of these sayyid-*ümera* whom we were able to identify in both Ottoman financial documents and other sources demonstrate several things. Firstly, the sayyids often took the first step in seeking appointments with the Ottomans. Their interest in the Ottoman administrative system was pragmatic; they saw it as a way to formalize their status as local rulers and to ensure their income, which came in part as a salary from the Ottoman budget rather than the revenues of their *sanjaq* alone. Secondly, there is an evolution of the Ottoman approach to such appointments. Some evidence shows that in the earlier periods of Ottoman rule in Yemen sayyids would not receive appointments to regions that they already controlled and would be instead moved to other locations. The Ottomans, however, did not have the means to enforce this rule, so with later governors, appointment strategy changed. What mattered now was personal expression of allegiance, an agreement to arrive in person at the court of the governor and to receive the appointment from his hands in a public ceremony that lasted several days. In some cases, hostages were taken to ensure the allegiance.[151] Appointments of sayyids to localities that they already

[149] A.RSK.d.1485, f. 2.
[150] Al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 477, ff. 37-39.
[151] The practice of hostage taking is well-attested in Yemeni history until these days. In historiography the focus has been so far on the Ḥamīd al-Dīn period. See Amīn Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Jabr, *Niẓām al-rahāʾin fī-l-Yaman (1918-1962)* (Dimashq / Dubayy: Nūr Ḥūrān li-l-dirāsāt wa-l-

claimed had inherent risks, yet until the 1030s/1620s these sayyids continued to participate in the Ottoman system. The collapse of this agreement among the elites coincided with the rule of the second Qasimid imam, al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad b. Qāsim (ruled 1029-1054/1620-1644).

Lower-level positions held by sayyids in Ottoman Yemen

There were also sayyids who took up lower-level appointments in the Ottoman system. They are impossible to trace in Ottoman financial documents for several reasons. Firstly, some of those who held lower-level military ranks are not mentioned in Ottoman sources by name, only by their ranks. The narrative sources from which we know about these people and their alliance with the Ottomans vehemently opposed the Ottomans (such as al-Sharafī). This means that these texts do not provide the ranks of these people in the Ottoman system as they were used by the Ottomans themselves. Secondly, some of the sayyids who associated with the Ottomans were members of the court of the governors. We would search for their names in vain in the financial registers that are focused on the military system. Nevertheless, the fragmentary data that we have is sufficient to demonstrate the hybrid character of the rule of the Ottomans in Yemen and their continuous efforts to include the local elite in the social arrangements that underlined the legitimacy of their presence in the region.

Since we found the Āl Sharaf al-Dīn closely entangled with the Ottomans, we would expect that their relatives from the Banū al-Wazīr would also be involved in relations with the new masters of Yemen. Indeed, one such example we discover is sayyid Ṣalāḥ b. Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Wazīr (954–1024/1547-1615), the son of Sitt al-Sharaf bint al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn and

nashr wa-l-turāth / Marāyā li-l-ṭibāʿa wa-l-nashr wa-l-tawzīʿ, 2019); Esther Peskes, "Geiseln in der jemenitischen Geschichte," *Oriental Archive* 81 (2013): 285–306.

Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Wazīr. He was born in Wādī al-Sirr, brought up in Kawkabān among the Sharaf al-Dīns and then moved to Ṣanʿāʾ. This means that he had a close relationship with the Sharaf al-Dīns (the period in Kawkabān) and ties to the Ottomans (the period in Ṣanʿāʾ). In Ṣanʿāʾ, succeeding Ottoman governors made sure that he was doing well. Ḥasan Pasha provided him with a sort of pension (described in al-Duʿāmī as *jirāyāt*) that included payments in cash and provisions.[152] The reason why the sayyid deserved such treatment, according to al-Duʿāmī, was that he came from a great scholarly family and had a noble pedigree.[153] This did not mean that the sayyid was not performing any tasks for the Ottomans. Later, he was a member of the entourage of the Ottoman governor Jaʿfer Pasha (1016-1025/1607-1618), with whom, according to records, he played chess.[154] His relationship with the Pasha was personal, and as a result, when Ṣalāḥ b. Aḥmad died in 1024/1615, his funeral was attended and paid for by the Pasha.[155] This was a special honor for a scholar and a sayyid who had close ties to the Ottomans and was loyal to them.

ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh b. Muṭahhar b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Din (d. 1048/1638) was another sayyid with a special status at the court of the Ottoman governor in Ṣanʿāʾ. He does not seem to have held an administrative post. He was a court chronicler and an astrologer who served several Ottoman governors. It is possible that his alliance with the Ottomans was in part a result of the devastating plague of 983/1575 during which many members of the Āl Sharaf al-Dīn died.[156] In addition, he was brought up without a father, as Luṭfallāh b. Muṭahhar was deported to Istanbul in

[152] Al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 477, f. 67.
[153] Al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 477, f. 67: *bayt al-ʿilm fī-l-Yaman kabīr wa manṣib shahīr.*
[154] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 3, pp. 440–447.
[155] ʿUthmān b. ʿAlī al-Wazīr*, Aṭrāf al-silsila allatī hiya bi-aktāf al-nubuwwa wa-l-wilāya,* NF C.35.ar, f. 98b.
[156] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 204.

994/1586. According to some sources, at the time, ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh was not even ten years old.[157] As a result, he was brought up by the family of his uncles, the pro-Ottoman rulers of Kawkabān. His career in Ṣanʿāʾ was launched during the governorship of Jaʿfer Pasha whom he advised on Yemeni politics.[158] The peak of his career is linked to the patronage of one of the last Ottoman governors of Yemen in this period, Muḥammad Rāghib Pasha (1026-1031/1617-1622). ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh dedicated his masterpiece chronicle *Rawḥ al-rūḥ* to him.[159] He continued his service to the Ottomans for some time after that, although his loyalties started to waver in 1022/1613. That year he wrote a letter to imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim b. Muḥammad and included a poem of praise in it. This action merited his inclusion in a separate entry in Ibn Abī al-Rijāl's biographical dictionary.[160] By the time of his death, he was closely associated with Ḥasan b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim and even resided in Shahāra where the younger supporters of the imam were suspicious of his Ottoman style clothing.[161] ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh is thus another member of the Āl Sharaf al-Dīn who enjoyed a long career under the Ottomans even if not in the military-administrative system.

The third and last example of a sayyid's career options in Ottoman Yemen comes from a short remark in al-Sharafī. He mentions that the petition of Muḥammad al-Muʾayyadī from 1008/1599 discussed earlier in this chapter was written by a certain Fāriʿ b. Ḥumayḍa of the *ashrāf* of the Jawf, i.e., a member of the Āl al-Ḥamza.[162] This indicates that this Fāriʿ was conversant

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[157] Wajīh provides 986/1578 as the birth date of this sayyid. ʿAbd al-Salām b. ʿAbbās al-Wajīh, *Aʿlām al-muʾallifīn al-zaydīya* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-thaqāfīya, 1999), 739–40.
[158] For instance, in 1024/1615 Īsā b. Luṭfallāh advised the Pasha to make his stand and stay in Ṣanʿāʾ despite of the expansion of the Qasimid uprising. Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 290.
[159] Ibn Luṭfallāh, 292.
[160] *Kuntu iktafaytu bi-dhikrihi fī tarjamat al-qāḍī al-ʿallāma Ibrāhīm b. Yaḥyā al-Suḥūlī raḥimahu allāh ḥattā raʾaytu lahu qaṣīda ilā-l-imām al-Manṣūr billāh al- Qāsim b. Muḥammad…* Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 3, p. 441.
[161] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, vol. 1, pp. 229–30.
[162] al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 151b.

with the styles of such petitions, which suggests that he was employed by the Ottomans in some administrative capacity. Indeed, from another brief mention in al-Sharafī we learn that he was rarely resident in the Jawf, his home, but instead navigated between Ṣanʿāʾ and missions to different regions.[163] Beyond that, traces of this sayyid disappear.

These three small career samples show that sayyids were able to integrate into the Ottoman system at various levels. They were the courtiers, the mediators, the advisors of the Ottomans that helped them navigate the Yemeni socio-political arena and helped the Yemeni elites communicate with them. The participation of pro-Ottoman sayyids at the lower levels of Ottoman administration and the functioning of the court was an important component of the success, albeit partial, of Ottoman rule in Yemen.

A Zaydi sayyid family in tributary ruler status: the Āl Shams al-Dīn, lords (aṣḥāb) of Kawkabān

The Āl Shams al-Dīn, a branch of Āl Sharaf al-Dīn, had a particular relationship with the Ottomans that we can designate as tributary rule. The relations binding the descendants of Shams al-Dīn b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn to the Ottoman government were unusual among other relationships between sayyids and Ottomans in Yemen because the position of this family was fixed geographically. They were the lords (*aṣḥāb*) of Kawkabān and it was under that title that they were inserted into the Ottoman financial documents.[164] Thus, on the one hand, they were a

[163] al-Sharafī, NF C.101.ar, f. 171a. In 1014/1605 he was sent on a mission to al-Ṣayd.
[164] Kawkabān is an ancient city to the north-west of Ṣanʿāʾ. It is most probable that due to its strategic location on the way to Ṣanʿāʾ there had already been a fort there in the pre-Islamic period. Clive Smith, "Kawkabān: Some of Its History," *Arabian Studies*, no. VI (1982): 32–50; A. Grohmann, "Kawkabān," in *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2012.

group among the *ümerā,* and on the other, they enjoyed an uncontested patrilineal transmission of power in one fixed location with the sanction of the Ottoman government.

The special status of the Āl Shams al-Dīn, while not too visible in the financial documents that "see" them as part of the military-administrative system, is clearly evident in the rituals that surround their "appointments." Their confirmation as lords of Kawkabān was loyally described by their administrator and first-hand witness of the events, ʿĀmir b. Muḥammad al-Duʿāmī. When Ḥasan Pasha arrived in Yemen in 989/1581, one of his first actions was to send a messenger, amīr Jaʿfer, to deliver presents (robes of honor – *khilaʿ*) to Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, the ruler (*ṣāḥib*) of Kawkabān. Having accepted the gifts in a public ceremony and affirmed his support of the sultan and the governor, he sent the messenger back with gifts (robes of honor and a horse) in the escort (*ṣuḥba*) of a trusted administrator – ʿĀmir al-Duʿāmī. Al-Duʿāmī was reciprocally received by the governor and delivered back to Kawkabān a letter from him.[165] This was the first pas-de-deux in a series of steps that resulted in the conclusion of a treaty (*ʿahd*).

In the next episode, the diplomatic and ceremonial exchange involved the *wazīr* of Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn. Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. Ṣalāḥ al-Ḥamzī arrived in Ṣanʿāʾ at the court of Ḥasan Pasha. A house in Ṣanʿāʾ was provided for the sayyid and his retinue; the Pasha received him and showered him with gifts. And on top of it all, a great feast (*simāṭ*) was held in a garden outside Ṣanʿāʾ, with a wide variety of dishes (sweets and meats, and 500 chickens were rumored to have been prepared for the feast). All of this was a public manifestation of the importance that the Ottoman governor attached to the cooperation with the

[165] Al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 477, ff. 9-10.

sayyids of the Āl Shams al-Dīn.[166] The people present at the feast included the Pasha and the *wazīr*, their retinues, city notables and even the Bedouin who were around at the time.[167] After the public part, the *wazīr* received additional gifts. Gifts were also distributed to the retinue of the *wazīr* according to rank. The purpose of these procedures was to pave the way for the discussion of the agreements (*ʿuhūd*) that would regulate the relationship between the Ottoman governor on one side, and Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn and his son Shams al-Dīn b. Muḥammad on the other.[168] It is noteworthy that the Ottoman governor legitimized the future patrilineal transmission of power in the family by including the son of the sayyid into the negotiations. This is an important sign of the special status of the Āl Shams al-Dīn and their success at maintaining it under the conditions of Ottoman rule which, in general, could not support any dynastic transmission of power among its officers and administrators.

The agreements between Ḥasan Pasha and the lords of Kawkabān included a central clause: that the sayyids would provide an army (*ʿaskar*) for the Ottoman attack on Ṣaʿda against imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Dāwud and would do the same if the rebellious amīr Muḥammad b. Ṇāṣir al-Ḥamzī attacked the Ottomans.[169] The campaign against imam al-Nāṣir was a central task of the first years of Ḥasan Pasha's governorship. Without the support of the Āl Sharaf al-Dīn, who controlled the lands between Ṣanʿāʾ and Ṣaʿda and commanded a significant standing army and a tribal militia, the governor stood no chance. Once the *wazīr* and the Pasha agreed on the treaty, a group

[166] Al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 477, ff. 17-19.
[167] *Min man bihā (Ṣanʿāʾ) min ahl al-bawādī.* Al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 477, f. 19.
[168] *Waqaʿat al-mufāwaḍa fī mā baynahu* (Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. Ṣalāḥ al-Ḥamzī) *wa bayna mawlānā ṣāḥib al-saʿāda* (Ḥasan Pasha) *ʿalā akhdh al-ʿuhūd wa-l-aymān wa ʿalā ittiḥād al-ḥāl fī mā bayna mawlānā ṣāḥib al-saʿāda wa bayna al-amīr ʿIzz al-Dīn* (Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn b.al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn) *wa waladihi al-amīr Shams al-Dīn fī ṭāʿat al-dawla al-saʿīda al-sulṭānīya wa-l-qiyām ʿalā man khālafa awāmirahā wa nawāhīhā min qarīb wa baʿīd.* Al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 477, f. 19.
[169] Al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 477, f. 19.

of messengers including Ḥusayn, the translator of the governor, took the document to Kawkabān for confirmation. (I assume here that the document was written but there are no mentions of it being in written form in al-Duʿāmī's account of events). In a session that involved Ḥusayn (the translator), Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn, his son, his *wazīr* Muḥammad al-Ḥamzī and two representatives of the Pasha – amīr Muṭahhar b. Shawīʿ and shaykh ʿAlī b. Mutāsh al-Khawlānī – the Āl Shams al-Dīn pledged their adherence to the treaty and allegiance to the governor.[170] Then the officers of the Ottomans returned to Ṣanʿāʾ to inform the governor that the sayyids of Kawkabān were loyal allies.[171] From the subsequent development of events it becomes clear that the Āl Shams al-Dīn did indeed always keep their side of the agreement. They did not need to provide any hostages, as the Āl al-Muʾayyad had done, and they did not need to travel to the court of the Ottoman governor in person to confirm their appointment and their allegiance. This points to a special tributary status of this family in Ottoman Yemen.

This status of the Āl Shams al-Dīn is additionally confirmed during the first Qasimid uprising. In 1007/1598, a combined Āl Shams al-Dīn and Ottoman attack was planned against ʿĀmīr b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad, the uncle of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim. In the early days of the campaign the Ottoman officer, amīr Sinān discussed with his supporters who should be the nominal leader of the attack. In a speech addressed to the *ruʾasāʾ* and *umarāʾ* he remarked that the *dāʿī* (implied here is imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim b. Muḥammad) was an enemy to all of them, and that the surest way to stop his progress was to attack ʿĀmīr b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad because he was that man's greatest follower (*aʿẓam aṣḥābihi*). Amīr Sinān then announced that he would prefer to see the lord of Kawkabān, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, as the leader

[170] Al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 477, f. 20.
[171] Al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 477, f. 21.

of the campaign. While not all those participating in the discussion supported the idea, let us pause and consider what this meant. An Ottoman officer was suggesting that the best person to lead a campaign against a would-be Zaydi imam was a Zaydi sayyid with tributary relations to the Ottomans. Understanding the inherent risks of such a choice, the amīr insisted that the allies needed to conclude agreements that confirmed their cooperation.[172] This was a radical suggestion and one that implied that the Ottomans were only assisting the lord of Kawkabān in regaining control of *his* territory, not of the sultan's lands. The *ruʾasāʾ* and *umarāʾ* then agreed that it would be best if Sinān led the war operation.[173] This is a clear example – even if distorted by the source of al-Sharafī and al-Sharafī himself – that the Ottomans saw their Āl Shams al-Dīn allies as equals and sought close coordination with them, especially in the military sphere. In this episode we see a dual model of leadership (with one person being an Ottoman and the second a local, sayyid) that demonstrates the adaptability of both Ottoman provincial rule and the Zaydi political system to new conditions.

The Āl Shams al-Dīn had another important function in the peculiar configurations of Ottoman-sayyid alliances in Zaydi Yemen. The sayyids of this family were tasked with bringing all other members of the Āl Sharaf al-Dīn to support of the Ottomans. Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn would write to his brothers, cousins and nephews residing in various towns of the Ḥajja region of Yemen advising them to join the Ottomans and he would report to the governor in Ṣanʿāʾ on the individual leanings of all of them. Sometimes the Ottoman governor would instruct the sayyid to communicate with another sayyid. Al-Duʿāmī's history traces several such clusters of dispatches already in 989-990/1581-82, the first year of Ḥasan Pasha's governorship. That year the lord of

[172] al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 147b: *lā budda lanā min ʿuhūd tuʾakkadahā baynanā annanā yad wāḥid ʿalā hādhā-l-maqṣad.*
[173] al-Sharafī, NF C.101.ar, f. 147b.

Kawkabān interceded twice with direct family members. First, Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn wrote to ʿAlī Yaḥyā b. Muṭahhar to convince his cousin of the benefits of joining the Ottomans.[174] Then, at the request of Ḥasan Pasha, the sayyid wrote to Luṭfallāh b. Muṭahhar to warn him against inciting the tribes of Khawlān against the Ottomans.[175] The two exchanges of letters involved several people from the Āl Sharaf al-Dīn and in both cases he was promoting the Ottoman administration to his relatives. In both cases, however, he did not succeed. The brothers ʿAlī Yaḥyā and Luṭfallāh pursued their own ambitions and were eventually crushed by the Ottomans.

These examples from the period of Ḥasan Pasha illustrate the special function of the Āl Shams al-Dīn as tributary rulers in Ottoman Yemen and their unusual status among other sayyids. Their function was to mediate between the Ottomans and the local sayyids, to serve as interpreters of Ottoman political will and guarantors of the Ottoman system to the sayyids. Moreover, their alliance with the Ottomans coupled with their persistence to stay in one location served them well in the long run. Despite the fact that eventually the Ottomans were pushed out of Yemen and the Kawkabāni Shams al-Dīns had to join the Qasimids, they were able to retain their control of the city. Their court continued to flourish, attracting poets and scholars, well into the eighteenth century.[176]

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[174] Al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 477, ff. 21-24.

[175] Al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 477, ff. 44-45. At least four letters were exchanged: Ḥasan Pasha to Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn; Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn to Luṭfallāh b. Muṭahhar; Ḥasan Pasha to Luṭfallāh b. Muṭahhar; Luṭfallāh b. Muṭahhar to Ḥasan Pasha.

[176] One attestation of this is the two-volume biographical dictionary of Yemeni poets, the first volume of which is entirely dedicated to the cultural scene in Kawkabān. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Kawkabānī, *Ṭīb al-samar fī awqāt al-saḥar*, ed. ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad al-Ḥibshī, 2 vols. (Abu Dhabi: al-Majmaʿ al-thaqāfī, 2002). This is also the period in which Carsten Niebuhr learns about this family and records their special status in Yemen. See Smith, "Kawkabān: Some of Its History," 38.

We could certainly consider the strength of the Āl Shams al-Dīn an aberration from the point of view of the "classical" Ottoman administrative system. However, I think it is more productive to think of it as a demonstration of political flexibility – both on the Ottoman side and on the Zaydi side. For the Ottomans, the Āl Shams al-Dīn fall into a long list of local rulers coopted into the regime. For the Zaydis, the Āl Shams al-Dīn were a demonstration of adaptability in the early modern period. No Zaydi source ever spoke of the family as traitors of the imamate.[177] Moreover, their semi-autonomous status under Ottoman rule provided them with a political immunity that sustained them during the Qasimid period and until the second Ottoman conquest of the nineteenth century. Thus, their experiment in maintaining links to a location while formalizing them through agreements with the Ottomans paid off. The success of this clan with a distinct identity is evident in the survival of the family through several centuries. A manuscript in the Glaser collection at the Austrian National Library (ÖNB) bears the mark of a direct descendant of Shams al-Dīn b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn twelve generations later.[178] The family maintained its library in the city until the twentieth century.[179]

Epilogue: The ashrāf after the Ottoman century

The Ottomans relied on sayyids and in particular on both branches of the Āl Sharaf al-Dīn in their administration of northern Yemen. What they could not, however, regulate, was competition

[177] Not even al-Sharafī, an author who would classify Yemeni Arabs serving the Ottomans as Turks, raised objections to the political maneuvers of the Āl Shams al-Dīn.
[178.] ÖNB Glaser 84, f. 1a contains an undated ownership mark bearing the name ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Qādir b. al-Nāṣir b. ʿAbd al-Rabb b. ʿAlī b. Shams al-Dīn b. al-imām al-Mutawakkil ʿalā-llāh Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn b. Shams al-Dīn b. al-imām al-Muʾayyad. An approximation would place this person in the eighteenth century. The manuscript itself, according to Max Grünert, must have been completed around 600/1204 or earlier. Max Grünert, "Kurzer Katalog der Glaserischen Sammlung arabischer Handschriften" (November 29, 1894), para. 31.
[179] Daniel Varisco, personal communication, October 23, 2020.

within the family and between different branches of the family. The instability of this ruling coalition eventually became one of the factors in the demise of Ottoman rule in Yemen.

The signs of rifts in the over-extended Āl Sharaf al-Dīn traced all the way back to the last years of the imamate of its founder, imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, and conflict was exacerbated by the sheer numbers of his progeny (the imam had eighteen sons and at least thirty-four grandsons). These descendants had both a group allegiance to the larger family and even stronger ambitions related to their own branches of the family. Thus, already in the period of Ḥasan Pasha we observe fights between the Āl Muṭahhar and the Āl Shams al-Dīn. [180] The conflict escalated to devastating military action that distracted the governor from a more urgent task – subduing imam al-Nāṣir in the Ṣaʿda region. This was a first sign of the instability of the political arrangement. After Ḥasan Pasha's governorship in Yemen came to end, the fighting in the family intensified. Subsequent governors made attempts to intervene, but now it was a war on two fronts, with the Qasimid uprising gaining new momentum in the 1020s/1610s. By that time, members of the formerly pro-Ottoman Āl Sharaf al-Dīn increasingly started to look to imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim as a more appealing ally and a guarantor of a new kind of legitimacy. We have already mentioned in this chapter the eulogistic poetry of ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh sent from Kawkabān to the imam in Shahāra in 1022/1613. It took, however, another decade for the Āl Shams al-Dīn of Kawkabān to fully abandon their Ottoman allies and join the Qasimid state.

In the new Qasimid imamate, however, there was less space for the political ambitions of the sayyids. The old ruling clans (the Āl al-Muʾayyad, the Āl al-Ḥamza) had to abandon their historical domains, since imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim, too, had sons and they wanted their own share of political authority (see chapter 3). The regions to which these families laid claim were assigned

[180] Al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 477, ff. 21-22.

to the sons of the imam. When the eldest son, Muḥammad b. al-imām Manṣūr Qāsim took over the imamate from his father, he reaffirmed the appointments of his brothers: Aḥmad and then Ḥasan to Ṣaʿda, Ḥusayn to al-Ḥayma. Only the Āl Shams al-Dīn kept their special status in Kawkabān.[181] Other "old" sayyid families like the Āl al-Ḥamza and the Āl al-Muʾayyad maintained their identities and to some extent their geographical presence, with some descendants continuing to reside in the areas which the family used to rule.[182] However, they were replaced in the political order by new elites, the 'old guard' of the Qasimids, who formed earlier alliances with the Qasimids which inevitably gave them a special position in the political hierarchy, as well as a new administrative class of non-sayyid scholars and tribal shaykhs.[183] Finally, the Qasimid state benefited from access to an economic resource base that no previous Zaydi state had commanded – the coffee trade.[184] With the profits of this trade the Qasimids were able to finance a standing army and a more complex administrative system. As a result, sayyids became redundant as local political leaders. By the twenty first century, the position of sayyids in Zaydi society had changed completely. In the new republican system that recognizes no noble distinctions, the sayyids are on a quest to reimagine their position in society.[185]

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[181] Eduard Glaser, *Reise nach Marib*, Documenta Arabica. Reiseliteratur (Hildesheim / Zürich / New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2005), 125 (note 1). The Qasimid imams could not ignore them and sought matrimonial alliances. Glaser, 125 (note 1); Smith, "Kawkabān: Some of Its History," 47 (note 27, citing Niebuhr).

[182] Such remarks are to be found, for instance, in the genealogical trees. Al-Muʾayyadī, *Rawḍat al-albāb,* NF B.18.ar, ff. 34ab (the Āl al-Ḥamza).

[183] Paul Dresch, "Imams and Tribes: The Writing and Acting of History in Upper Yemen," in *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, ed. Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 267–70. Among such new families that rose to prominence under the Qasimids are the scholarly family (of tribal origins) al-Akwaʿ, whom we will discuss in chapter 5, and sayyid families such as the Fāʾiʿ (wazīrs of the Qasimids in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries) and the al-Kibsī.

[184] Bernard Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muhammad al-Shawkānī*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilisation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 16–17.

[185] vom Bruck, *Islam, Memory, and Morality in Yemen: Ruling Families in Transition*.

Conclusion

From the pre-Ottoman to the Qasimid period sayyids commanded authority in Zaydi society due to their status as descendants of the Prophet and the special characteristics of Zaydi doctrine that made them all, potentially, candidates for the imamate. As active networkers, sayyids used any opportunity to build alliances not only among themselves but also including non-sayyid Yemenis, in particular scholars of tribal background and rich urban dwellers. A secure path to such expansion was appointments as local administrators. The methods of such inclusion that we explored in this chapter were marriage and study (we will additionally consider scholarly networks in chapter 5). In addition to their extensive networks, a few sayyid families had private wealth at their disposal due to the fact that they were landowners, participated in the lucrative horse trade, or had made fortunate marriage alliances with rich Yemeni merchants. As a result, some of the leading *ashrāf* families stayed at the frontline of socio-political transformation in Yemen for centuries. All this made it crucial for successive governments to find approaches to the sayyids, either through cooption or through their elimination from the political sphere through exile or long-term imprisonment.

However, despite these permanent characteristics of the sayyid clans, their fates changed throughout the periods discussed in this chapter, thus reflecting the transformation of the Zaydi state. Prior to the first Ottoman conquest they took up various roles – as administrators, scholars, horse traders, and men occupied with agriculture. Using their appointments (or formalizing their links to localities through appointments) some of the pre-Ottoman sayyid families became local rulers that could not be easily dislodged from their domains. As a result, for most of its medieval history northern Yemen was a patchwork of unruly dominions of such entrenched sayyid families.

In the Ottoman period, some of the "old" prominent sayyid clans were offered an opportunity to integrate into the Ottoman military-administrative system. Most of the sayyids who chose this path became members of the *ümerā* class. Due to the distancing practices of the Ottomans their links to geographically fixed locations started to break up. Only a few sayyids managed to use the Ottoman system to further formalize their links to certain regions. The unequal treatment of different sayyid clans by the Ottomans became one of the problems that eventually led to the disintegration of Ottoman rule in the region. Seeing that the Ottoman governors were not rushing to affirm their status, powerful sayyids turned to the rising Qasimid dynasty.

In the post-Ottoman, Qasimid period, the *ashrāf* preserved some of the traits they acquired in the Ottoman period. However, their political role and status deteriorated as the Qasimid imamate became more successful at cutting off any potential competitors for the imamate from outside the Qasimid family. The *ashrāf* thus became a "weak" group in Yemeni society ceding their position to the professional scholarly class which drew members from various social groups. The rise of this class is what we will consider in the following chapter.

Chapter 5. The Zaydi literati as members of the political elite in Yemen

In pre-modern societies, literacy of the kind that allows people to perform bureaucratic tasks is a limited resource. There are few avenues for receiving a sufficient education. In pre-modern Islamic societies, including Zaydi Yemen, the main avenue for the production of literate people was the system of religious education. This chapter focuses on the place of people educated within the Zaydi religious system in the administration of the state and how a period of interaction with professionally trained administrators affected them.

The power of scholars in Zaydi Yemen derived from several sources. Firstly, their knowledge of the Zaydi religious, legal, theological tradition made them qualified to pass judgments on the quality of candidates for the imamate. The candidates for the imamate sought contacts with the scholars by learning from them and then organizing study sessions with them. The practice of knowledge transfer thus became infused with political meaning, as scholarly recognition of a candidate's intellectual standing was directly (though not conclusively) connected to his political success. Through this, Zaydi scholars became political actors as their judgments in the pre-Ottoman Zaydi state were directly linked to questions of succession and power transfer. This power that the Zaydi *ʿulamāʾ* had in the imamate was comparable to only few other early modern Islamic states, with the closest example being that of the Ibadi imamate of Oman where the *ʿulamāʾ* elected the imam.[1] The Zaydi *ʿulamāʾ* did not elect the imam, but they were one of the many groups whose support the aspiring candidate for the imamate needed to seek.

[1] John Craven Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition of Oman*, Cambridge Middle East Library (Cambridge / New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 187–88. Of particular importance to this comparison is that the Ibadi imam was in fact elected by the *ʿulamāʾ*. The limitation of this comparison is that the Ibadi imamate was a much weaker political system than the Zaydi imamate since the Ibadi imam had strict limitations on his authority (for instance, he could not mint his own coin or command an army). Ibid., p. 183.

Secondly, the autonomous status of Zaydi scholars who received their education in an informal, personalized system, the centerpiece of which was the *hijra*, allowed them to keep a distance from the workings of the central state.[2] *Hijra*s were self-governing localities in which scholarly activities were concentrated; they remained outside the reach of any government but were in close contact with local tribes who guaranteed the safety of those residing in them. Having an economic base of their own in the family *waqf*s and in the absence of career paths in the weak bureaucratic system of Zaydi Yemen, the scholars were empowered to act on their own. The autonomy of the scholars from the state allowed them to maintain a moral stance of impartiality. The autonomy of the *hijra* system was only undermined in the early twentieth century when the Zaydi state became powerful enough to establish control of the waqfs of the *hijra*s and to build a new educational center – al-Madrasa al-ʿIlmīya.[3]

During the Ottoman century the status quo changed. The Ottoman bureaucracy with which the Yemeni population interacted employed Ottoman *ʿulamāʾ* and, by the end of the Ottoman period in Yemen, professionally trained members of the *kalemīye,* the class of men of the pen, or bureaucrats.[4] The complex Ottoman bureaucratic system created new job opportunities for Zaydi literati. As Yemeni powerholders, such as the sayyid clans discussed in chapter 4, started to imitate

[2] Bernard Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muhammad al-Shawkānī*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilisation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 72.
[3] Eirik Hovden, *Waqf in Zaydi Yemen: Legal Theory, Codification, and Local Practice*, Studies in Islamic Law and Society 46 (Leiden, The Netherlands ; Boston: Brill, 2019), 122–23. Al-Madrasa al-ʿIlmīya is, in the words of Hovden, "an Azhar-inspired and Ottoman-inspired state *sharīʿa* college" founded in 1926 in Ṣanʿāʾ. (Ibid., pp. 117, 121-122).
[4] The ruling elite of the pre-Tanzimat Ottoman Empire was consisted of three components – men of the sword (*seyfīye*), scholars (*ilmīye*) and bureaucrats (*kalemīye*). However, boundaries between the categories were fluid, in particular, both scholars and military men could fulfill the tasks of the bureaucrats. Stephanie Cronin et al., "Niẓām ʿAskarī," in *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2012.

Ottoman administrative practices, Zaydi scholars found employment as *wazīr*s of these notable families. Furthermore, they increasingly warmed up to the prospects of pursuing a career in the Ottoman administration in Yemen. Alongside this gain in bureaucratic power, scholars started to lose some of their independence, as the Ottoman provincial governors made attempts to increase their control over *waqf*s and centralize education.

During the Qasimid period, the shift towards a professional class of administrators continued, in particular once the Zaydi imams started to control the coffee trade and could afford a larger bureaucratic apparatus. The expanding bureaucratic system remained an appealing venue for the educated to pursue careers. By this time, we can finally speak of a sense of professional identity present among the Zaydi *ʿulamāʾ*. This is particularly visible in the composition of biographical dictionaries. Since the imamate was transforming into a dynastic state, there was no need for scholars to pass judgments on the quality of imams as scholars. With the requirement for the imam to be a scholar increasingly set aside, Zaydi scholars gained power by supporting the innovative dynastic transmission of power and legitimizing the rule of the imams.

Zaydi ʿulamāʾ in the pre-Ottoman period

The making of a scholar in the pre-Ottoman period

The making of a Zaydi scholar began with basic literacy education – the memorization of the Qur'an, the acquisition of reading and writing skills. Those who were born into scholarly families, had the good fortune to have their relatives as primary instructors.[5] A short autobiography

[5] This is the case of many members of the Banū al-Wazīr discussed in the previous chapter. The tradition continues in modern Yemen, as is evidenced in the biography of Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Manṣūr (1916-2015). See: Sabine Schmidtke, *Traditional Yemeni Scholarship amidst Political Turmoil and War : Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl b. al-Muṭahhar al-Manṣūr (1915-2016) and His Personal Library*, Arabo-Islamica (Cordoba: UCOPress, 2018), 23.

written by the Yemeni Shafiʿī scholar Ṣāliḥ b. Ṣiddīq al-Namāzī (d. 975/1567) provides a window into the world of non-elite scholars. Al-Namāzī came from the predominantly Shafiʿī region of al-Mikhlāf al-Sulaymānī.[6] In the description of his education, he dedicated the first pages of his autobiography to his first teacher, a village *qāḍī* called Mūsā b. Aḥmad, a simple *ʿālim* for whom one would search in vain in the biographical dictionaries like Ibn Abī al-Rijāl's *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr.* This scholar, as his student himself admits, was not that well-educated: he knew some *fiqh*, some geometry (*misāḥa*) and counting (*ḥisāb*). The *qāḍī* owned some arable land (*kāna lahu arḍ ṣāliḥa*) and probably was occupied with its maintenance as much as the people of the village that he resided in. Despite his simple background, this village scholar had a wider view of the world than one could expect – and having passed on his knowledge to al-Namāzī he urged him to pursue his studies.[7] While this story concerns the basic education of a Shāfiʿī scholar, there is little reason to assume that the situation was any different for future Zaydi scholars growing up outside of urban centers and without access to educated relatives. It is people like Mūsā b. Aḥmad who stood at the frontline, maintaining the Zaydi identity of the community. The *qāḍī*, half-peasant himself, was thus the only person from whom a boy could learn the basic tenets of Islam.[8]

Having received basic literacy skills and memorized the Qur'an, a future Zaydi scholar in Yemen had to find his way to an urban center or a *hijra* to continue his studies with famous

[6] He, however, had close links to the Zaydi community, and resided in Ṣanʿāʾ at imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's court. *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, f. 54a.
[7] NF F.237.ar, ff. 66b-67a.
[8] Basic literacy in Yemen was instilled in Qur'anic schools, and instruction took place in the market or in a mosque, as described in Brinkley M. Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 75–77. I thank Bernard Haykel for this reference.

scholars.[9] Instead of the madrasa system,[10] Zaydi education relied on a system of *hijra*s – secluded inhabited localities under tribal protection, usually of a small size, that lay at significant distance from each other. There scholars organized centers of knowledge that attracted students from all over the region. These intellectual hubs accumulated *waqf*s, books and prestige (by attracting seekers of knowledge) over generations. However, few could afford to travel to the *hijra*s and reside there with their teachers for prolonged periods of time. Moreover, since there was no formalized system in the education of a Zaydi scholar, each student would have to rely on his teachers to direct him to other teachers. The scholarly networks were the only thing that held the *hijra*s together. As a result, the disparity among levels of knowledge was high, as both the financial burden of travel and the need for personal connections to study created obstacles for students.

In a *hijra*, a student would pursue courses with different teachers aiming to gain certificates (*ijāza*s) from them. Usually, the study curriculum began with Arabic linguistics and then moved through the subjects of law and theology. Certain textual transmissions were much sought after if

[9] The Shāfiʿīs of Yemen also had *hijra*s. See the mention of the *hijar ʿulamā al-shāfiʿīya* near Abū Danqūr in Mikhlāf in Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Namāzī, *Khulāṣat al-silāf fī akhbār Ṣabyā wa-l-Mikhlāf*, ed. Darwīsh Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh M. al-Ahdal and Muḥammad Muḥammad ʿAfīf M. al-Ahdal (Ṣanʿāʾ: Maktabat Khālid bin al-Walīd; Dār al-Kutub al-Yamanīya, 2011), 34.

[10] The earliest mention of a Zaydi madrasa dates from the period of rule of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, but in effect it was a mosque in which some teaching was going on as was common in Yemen. The madrasa in question is located in Thulā. At least one manuscript mentions it as a place of scholarly exchange in the Qasimid period and gives its name as *al-madrasa al-mubāraka madrasat al-imām al-mutawakkil ʿalā-llāh sharaf al-dīn.* NF F.56.ar, f. 150b (dated 1058/1649). Al-Sharafī also writes of a madrasa built in Kawkabān. Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 168a. Imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn expanded one of the mosques of Ṣanʿāʾ so that it eventually became known as a madrasa. Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, f. 185b. Wilferd Madelung, "Islam in Yemen," in *Yemen: 3000 Years of Art and Civilization in Arabia Felix*, ed. Werner Daum (Innsbruck / Frankfurt am Main: Pinguin-Verlag / Umschau-Verlag, 1987), 175. I also came across information on the madrasat Ḥūth (NF F.188.ar, f. 2a) and madrasat Dahmāʾ in Thulā (al-Sharafī, NF C.101.ar, f. 91b) but interestingly both appear in the context of someone being buried next to them, which indicates that both were actually mosques.

they were deemed prestigious – for example, by linking the student through a short transmission chain to the author of a work. Among the works that were accorded great prestige were for example the works of imam al-Mahdī Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Murtaḍā (Ibn al-Murtaḍā), *Kitāb al-baḥr al-zakhkhār al-jāmiʿ li madhāhib ʿulamāʾ al-amṣār*, its abridgement *Kitāb al-azhār fī fiqh al-aʾimma al-aṭhār,* and the commentary *Sharḥ al-azhār* by Ibn al-Miftāḥ.[11] Chains of transmission that included imams, authors of works or important scholars were also sought-after. Surviving *ijāza*s constitute an immensely rich source for research. So far, they have been exploited in the context of intellectual history, but these certificates can also be interpreted in the context of socio-political history, as windows into the power networks that scholars built.

The *hijra*s of Yemen and the political role of the ʿulamāʾ

The most important political function of the *ʿulamāʾ* in Zaydi Yemen was to assess the quality of candidates for the imamate. The fact that the *ʿulamāʾ* of non-sayyid descent could not contend for the position of the imam and tended to reside outside of the reach of the state (which was usually located in urban centers) in *hijra*s made them participants of the political games in Yemen in the role of arbiters. In addition, without the support of the *ʿulamāʾ* imams and any other government officials had a hard time connecting to the tribal population, to which the *ʿulamāʾ* were linked both through their tribal descent and their location in the rural *hijra*s.

Modern scholarship sees the system of *hijra*s and the legal pluralism that it creates as an obstacle for any government's attempt to gain a foothold in tribal areas.[12] This is derived from the definition of *hijra* as a protection agreement with a tribe to guarantee safety of residence for a

[11] Eirik Hovden, *Waqf in Zaydi Yemen: Legal Theory, Codification, and Local Practice*, Studies in Islamic Law and Society 46 (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2019), 156–65.
[12] Hovden, *Waqf in Zaydi Yemen*, 2019, 9.

group of sayyids and scholars, which makes it a legally semi-autonomous entity. The documents that are cited in scholarly literature to support the idea of *hijra* as a protection agreement date from the late nineteenth – early twentieth century. Dresch, for instance, cites a 1918 document of *hijra* which was a renewal of an earlier undated document.[13] The earliest documents from Baraṭ that he cites date from the late eighteenth century and are in fact significantly later copies of now lost originals.[14] However, pre-nineteenth century sources do not link the foundation of *hijra*s to tribal support.[15] Indeed, one sees the scholars managing their own affairs, especially when it comes to *waqf*s that support their existence. The relationship with the local tribes is not fixed in documents (or none survive), does not appear as that of inferiority. Instead, the *hijra* appears as a scholarly center. It is also used in the context of the *daʿwa* of an imam as an invitation for scholars to join him. In this sense the term evokes the spirit of the original *hijra* of the supporters of the Prophet to draw a parallel to the movement of scholars towards the just imam. One possible explanation for this usage of *hijra* is the fact that the sources are composed by scholars and perhaps their authors did not wish to mention their agreements with the tribes. Nevertheless, the autonomy of the *hijra*s as locations is clearly present in this period.

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[13] Paul Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen* (Oxford / New York, NY: Clarendon Press / Oxford University Press, 1989), 142.

[14] See for example the document the text of which claims to be from 1211 / 1796 but that is in fact copied in 1414. Paul Dresch, *The Rules of Barat. Tribal Documents from Yemen: Texts and Translation*, Textes et documents sur la Péninsule Arabique (Sanaa: Centre français d'archéologie et de sciences sociales, 2016), 203–74, http://books.openedition.org/cefas/752.

[15] For example, imam al-Mahdī ʿAlī b. Muḥammad is recorded in the sources as being born in an unknown *hijra* in the al-Hān region [*hijra min jihāt al-Hān*]. There is no mention of the tribes that guaranteed the *hijra*. *Tatimmat al-ifāda fī tārīkh al-aʾimma al-sāda,* Berlin Glaser 37, f. 67b. Another example is the imamic *hijra* (*al-hijra al-imāmīya*) Jirāf that was founded by imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn. Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn,* vol. 2, ZA 238-03, f. 34/41.

The autonomous *ʿulamāʾ* who had the *waqf*s they need to support them materially, the tribes that respected them and deferred important decisions to them, and the knowledge and related authority to dispense justice, thus became central to a successful *daʿwa* of a Zaydi imam.

Scholars in the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate

The Sharaf al-Dīn imamate in many ways embodied the Zaydi ideal. The imam – Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn – pursued studies from an early age with some of the most accomplished scholars of his time. Early on during his *daʿwa* he received the support of scholars who recognized his scholarly credentials. Throughout his long life, he taught and wrote books that became important additions to the Zaydi canon. The imam relied on his scholarly networks in the appointment of officials. This was the realization of the traditional ideas of the Zaydi imamate

The early scholarly network of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn and its political function

Zaydi imams were expected to achieve a high level of knowledge, ideally to the point of being able to make independent judgments on Islamic law (*ijtihād*). It is therefore unsurprising that future imams pursued knowledge. The importance of education was enshrined in the *sīra*s of the imams, in which a separate section was dedicated to the studies of the imam. The difficulty of assessing the role of the teachers of the imam in his political career is that it is hard to disentangle cause and effect in the sources. Did these scholars become more important because of previous achievements and connections? Or did their association with the imam grant them a higher status that was then projected backwards by the biographers? A comparison of an early source (al-ʿUlufī's *sīra* of the imam composed around 935/1528) with a later one (Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal's *sīra* composed in the Qasimid period) provides some clues.

Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal and al-ʿUlufī provide a detailed list of the teachers of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn. They list fifteen teachers of the imam, and there are only a few disagreements in these lists (see the table below). Both lists are arranged in chronological order, first listing the teachers of the imam in Ẓafīr Ḥajja, where he started his education, and then discussing his teachers in Ṣanʿāʾ, whom he encountered after he moved to the city at the age of sixteen.

Table 6. List of teachers of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn.

Name of scholar	**Location**	**Type of study / certificate**	**Al-ʿUlufī**	**Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal**
al-Hādī b. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Wazīr (d. 923/1517)	Ṣanʿāʾ	qirāʾa, ijāza	yes	yes
Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Wazīr (d. 914/1509)	Ṣanʿāʾ	ijāza	yes	no
imam al-Manṣūr billāh Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Wushalī al-Sirājī (d. 910/1505)	Ṣanʿāʾ	qirāʾa, samāʿ, ijāza	yes	yes
Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ẓafārī	Ṣanʿāʾ	qirāʾa	yes	yes
Qāsim b. Yūsuf b. Muʿawwiḍa al-Hānī (d. 917/1512)	Ṣanʿāʾ	qirāʾa	yes	yes
Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Bahāʾ al-Qurashī al-ʿUlufī	Ṣanʿāʾ	qirāʾa	yes	yes
ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad al-Shaẓabī (d. 907/1502)	Ẓafīr (in Ḥajja)	qirāʾa	yes	yes
ʿAbdallāh b. Masʿūd b. Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAlī al-Ḥiwālī al-Akwaʿ (d. 936/1530)	Ẓafīr (in Ḥajja)	qirāʾa	yes	yes
ʿAbdallāh b. Yaḥyā al-Nāẓirī (d. 920/1514)	Ẓafīr (in Ḥajja)	qirāʾa	yes	yes
ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Qurashī al-ʿUlufī	Ṣanʿāʾ	qirāʾa	yes	yes
ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. Mukābir al-Shaṭabī (d. 908 or 909 / 1503 or 1504)[16]	Ṣanʿāʾ	qirāʾa, ijāza	yes	yes
ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā b. Ṣāliḥ al-ʿUlufī	Ṣanʿāʾ	qirāʾa	yes	yes
ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad	Ṣanʿāʾ	n/d	no	yes

Sources: al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, ff. 10a-16b; Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal, Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm. *Al-Sulūk al-dhahabīya fī khulāṣat al-sīra al-mutawakkilīya*. Edited by Zayd b. ʿAlī al-Fuḍayl. 1st ed. Jidda: Maṭbaʿat al-mafāhīm li-l-ṭibāʿa wa-l-taṣāmīm, 2012, pp. 79-85

[16] ʿAbd al-Salām b. ʿAbbās al-Wajīh, *Aʿlām al-muʾallifīn al-zaydīya* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-thaqāfīya, 1999), 656–57.

One discrepancy seems to be a mistake in the names of an Banū al-Wazīr scholar – al-ʿUlufī mentions al-Hādī b. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad, whereas Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal mentions an al-Hādī b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm. In this case, we can assert that the name given in al-ʿUlufī is correct, whereas that in Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal is a mistake, because we can check these names against another reliable source – the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr.* The *Tārīkh* knows only of an al-Hādī b. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad (d. 923/1517), who fits the profile of a teacher of the imam.[17] And while there is information in the *Tārīkh* about an ostensible father mentioned by Ibn al-Muffaḍḍal, a Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Wazīr (d. 909/1503), there is no information that he had a son, who was a reputable scholar and a potential teacher of a future imam.[18]

The other discrepancy in the names is no simple scribal mistake. In the edition of *al-Sulūk al-dhahabīya* there is mention of an ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad, with whom the imam studied in Ṣanʿāʾ. No scholar of such name is mentioned in al-ʿUlufī's list of teachers of the imam. He could be ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Ḍamadī, a Shafīʿī scholar.[19] However, there is no mention in the text of the *sīra* of any other people with the *nisba* al-Ḍamadī. Such mentions appear in the *sīra* of the imam by al-Zurayqī, a source that was composed later than that of al-ʿUlufī (but still during the life of the imam).[20] The later *sīra* of al-Zurayqī mentions a faqīh Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿUmar al-Ḍamadī, who sent praise poetry (*madḥ*) to the imam on 8 Shaʿbān 940 / February 22, 1534 to congratulate him on the conquest of Ṣaʿda. The poem arrived with a relative of the faqīh, a certain,

[17] *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr*, NF D.556.ar, ff. 43a, 44b.
[18] *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, ff. 45b, 55b-56a.
[19] Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr wa-majmaʿ al-buḥūr fī tarājim rijāl al-zaydīya*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raqīb Muṭahhar Muḥammad Ḥajar, 1st ed. (Ṣaʿda: Markaz Ahl al-Bayt li-l-dirāsāt al-islāmīya, 2004), vol. 3, pp. 367–68.
[20] Al-Zurayqī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn,* ÖNB Glaser 39, ff. 35b-38b. The faqīh stayed in touch with the imam at least until 952/1546, when he sent him a letter. Al-Zurayqī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn,* ZA 238-03, f. 22/29.

Abū-l-Qāsim b. Yaḥyā al-Nuʿmān, who stayed with the imam.[21] There is a simple explanation to the establishment of this link – the conquest of Ṣaʿda in 940/1534 entailed an alliance with the Āl al-Muʾayyad, who were in power there, and, by extension, their supporters, among whom the Ḍamadīs of Tihāma and Abū ʿArīsh were prominent (on the links between Ṣaʿda and the Tihāma see chapters 1 and 2). In short, a connection to the Ḍamadīs extended the geographical outreach of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate. This can explain why a later source, like Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal, sought to build a link to the al-Ḍamadī family and might indicate that a connection with the imam was established post factum, when Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal was creating an integrated narrative of his ancestor's life. To be clear, the fact that al-ʿUlufī did not list al-Ḍamadī as a teacher of the imam does not mean that the imam could not have actually studied with him. After all, out of the two ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Ḍamadīs listed by Ibn Abī al-Rijāl, one studied with the imam's grandmother and sister of his grandfather the imam al-Mahdī Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā, Dahmāʾ bint Yaḥyā.[22] This would have been a prestigious line of transmission for the imam to maintain.

This discrepancy, surrounding the figure of al-Ḍamadī, is important as it points to the political trends underlying such an innocuous thing as a list of teachers. What was at stake for him at the time of writing of the *sīra* was not only the pursuit of knowledge, but also the establishment of political alliances. The list of his teachers and supporters yields further evidence of this double agenda. Only three the teachers of the imam are sayyids – two are members of the Banū al-Wazīr and one is the imam al-Manṣūr Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Sirājī. The remaining scholars are all of

[21] The al-Ḍamadī family members that are mentioned in Ibn Abī al-Rijāl tend to have a second name al-Nuʿmān in addition to the *nisba* al-Ḍamadī. I base my assumption that Abū-l-Qāsim is a member of this family on this fact. In addition, the dictionary lists an Aḥmad b. Abī-l-Qāsim al-Ḍamadī, a supporter of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim and, possibly, a son of the Abū-l-Qāsim al-Nuʿmān in al-Zurayqī. Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 1, p. 406.
[22] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, vol. 3, p. 368.

tribal background. The proportions of scholars in terms of their background are in no way indicative of the actual distribution of scholars between sayyids and tribes in Zaydi Yemen (a question worth answering but that lies outside of the scope of this dissertation). It does, however, point to a political strategy. Imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn did not need to study with sayyids to build alliances with them. Studying with scholars from tribal backgrounds, on the other hand, was one of the best strategies available to the imam for the construction of alliances. Moreover, in the long run the scholars also benefited from these interactions.

The imam was able to establish stronger political contacts with his teachers in the home of his ancestors, Ẓafīr Ḥajja, and despite his young age at the time of interaction with these scholars (under the age of sixteen according to all *sīras*), these contacts were long-lasting. Ẓafīr Ḥajja, also known as al-Ẓafīr, became an important scholarly center during the rule of Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's grandfather imam al-Manṣūr Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā.[23] His grandson was enjoying the fruit of the intellectual efflorescence. The biographies of the imam list three teachers in Ẓafīr Ḥajja. All three were of tribal background – one came from the Dhū al-Ḥiwāl tribe of Ḥimayr (ʿAbdallāh b. Masʿūd b. Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAlī al-Akwaʿ al-Ḥiwālī (d. 936/1530)[24]), another was allied with the Ḥāshid tribal confederation and was related to a family that collaborated with the Tahirids (ʿAbdallāh b. Yaḥyā al-Nāẓirī (d. 920/1514)[25]), and the third had close connections to the tribes of Shaẓab (ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad b. Mukābir al-Shaẓabī (d. 907/1502)[26]). These scholarly families played a role in the

[23] Ismāʿīl b. ʿAlī al-Akwaʿ, *Hijar al-ʿilm wa-maʿāqiluhu fī-l-Yaman* (Beirut, Damascus: Dār al-fikr al-muʿāṣir / Dār al-Fikr, 1416), vol. 3, pp. 1312–1313.
[24] Ibrāhīm b. al-Qāsim al-Shahārī, *Ṭabaqāt al-zaydīya al-kubrā. al-Qism al-thālith. Wa-yusammā bulūgh al-murād ilā maʿrifat al-asnād*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām b. ʿAbbās al-Wajīh (Amman: Muʾassasat al-imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-thaqāfīya, 2001), vol. 3, pp. 640–641; Ismāʿīl b. ʿAlī al-Akwaʿ, *Tārīkh aʿlām Āl al-Akwaʿ* (Beirut: Dār al-fikr al-muʿāṣir, 1990), 88–89. al-Wajīh, *Aʿlām al-muʾallifīn al-zaydīya*, 620–21.
[25] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 3, p. 168.
[26] al-Shahārī, *TZK*, vol. 2, p. 704.

establishment of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate, provided the imam with contacts in Ṣanʿāʾ, where his education continued, and strengthened his link to the Banū al-Wazīr.

The Dhū al-Ḥiwāl are a *baṭn* of Ḥimyar with several sections and with a strong hand in Yemeni politics.[27] The famous al-Akwaʿ scholarly family that traced its history to the Sulayhid period and became one of the most important scholarly families of Zaydi Yemen, also belonged to the Dhū al-Ḥiwāl.[28] The family had a historical connection to political authority that made them valuable allies of the imam. In addition to this, the members of the Dhū al-Ḥiwāl supported the creation of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate due to their links to the Banū al-Wazīr. ʿAbdallāh b. Masʿūd b. Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAlī al-Ḥiwālī (d. 936/1530)[29], who is listed among the teachers of the imam, was a dedicated student of two members of the Banū al-Wazīr: Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad and his son al-Hādī b. Ibrāhīm.[30] His biography in Ibn Abī al-Rijāl mentions two sources – a relative from his clan, ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mahdī al-Ḥiwālī (d. 1061/1651) and ʿAlī al-Murtaḍā b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, the son of the imam.[31] This, along with the evidence of his studies with members

[27] Ibrāhīm Aḥmad al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam al-buldān wa-l-qabāʾil al-yamanīya* (Ṣanʿāʾ / Beirut: Dār al-kalima li-l-ṭibāʿa wa-l-nashr wa-l-tawzīʿ / al-Muʾassasa al-jāmiʿīya li-l-dirāsāt wa-l-nashr wa-l-tawzīʿ, 2002), vol. 1, p. 526. The importance of the Dhū al-Ḥiwāl is acknowledged through their inclusion into the genealogical tables of the most important Yemeni families. Al-Muʾayyadī, *Rawḍat al-albāb,* NF B.18.ar, f. 41b. One of their sections founded a dynasty centered in Kawkabān – the Yuʿfirid dynasty (232-387 / 847-998) that claimed descent from pre-Islamic Ḥimyarite rulers. Another is considered ancestral to the Sulayhid dynasty. See Charles L. Geddes, "The Yuʿfirid Dynasty of Ṣanʿāʾ" (Ph.D. Dissertation, London, UK, University of London, 1959); Ella Landau-Tasseron, "Arabia," in *The New Cambridge History of Islam: Volume 1: The Formation of the Islamic World, Sixth to Eleventh Centuries*, ed. Chase F. Robinson, vol. 1, The New Cambridge History of Islam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 422; G. Rex Smith, "Early and Medieval History of Sanʿāʾ," in *Sanʿāʾ: An Arabian Islamic City* (World of Islam Festival Trust, 1983), 55–57. al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 1, p. 526.
[28] al-Akwaʿ, *Tārīkh aʿlām Āl al-Akwaʿ*, 17, 137; al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 1, p. 526. Al-Muʾayyadī, *Rawḍat al-albāb,* NF B.18.ar, f. 41b.
[29] al-Wajīh, *Aʿlām al-muʾallifīn al-zaydīya*, 620–21; al-Shahārī, *TZK*, vol. 3, pp. 640–41; Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 3, pp. 135–36.
[30] al-Akwaʿ, *Tārīkh aʿlām Āl al-Akwaʿ*, 89.
[31] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 3, pp. 135–36.

of the Banū al-Wazīr and the fact that he taught the sons of the imam, is indicative of the solid link connecting the al-Ḥiwālī clan to the imam. There are, however, no traces of any political activity of this scholar or any official appointments conferred on him in the sources available to me. One indirect indication of the beneficial consequences of close ties between this clan and the Banū al-Wazīr and imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn is that after ʿAbdallāh b. Masʿūd the Dhū al-Ḥiwāl dominated the *hijra* al-Ẓahrayn, located close to Ẓafīr Ḥajja.[32]

The Āl al-Nāẓirī had Ḥāshid affiliations and enjoyed a strong presence in Shaṭab, Hanūm and Ḥajūr. The teacher of the imam, ʿAbdallāh b. Yaḥyā al-Nāẓirī, was a *qāḍī* in the times of imam al-Manṣūr al-Sirājī. It was clear to contemporaries that he used the accumulated influence for the benefit of his new patron, imam Sharaf al-Dīn, even though no particular descriptions of what such support entailed are given.[33] The importance of the *qāḍī* to the imam is indirectly confirmed by the fact that the imam attended his burial in Ṣanʿāʾ in 924/1518 and later ordered the transfer of his grave to Thulā, his capital.[34] The *qāḍī* also had strong ties to the Banū al-Wazīr – al-Nāṣir and al-Muntaṣir b. Yaḥyā – the two supporters of the imam whom we discussed in chapter 4. The Āl al-Nāẓirī had been administrators under the Tahirids and therefore had connections in Lower Yemen. In 919/1513, ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Nāẓirī, possibly an uncle of the teacher of the imam, was appointed *wālī* of Zabīd.[35] However, we have no evidence of a close connection between the Tahirid *wālī* and the imam. Nevertheless, the potential of this association is evident.

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[32] See the list of members of the family associated with his *hijra* in al-Akwaʿ, *Hijar al-ʿilm*, vol. 3, pp. 1380–84.
[33] *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, f. 40a.
[34] *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, f. 40a; Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr,* vol. 3, p. 169; al-Shahārī, *TZK*, vol 2, p. 658.
[35] ʿĪsā Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ fī mā ḥadatha baʿd al-miʾa al-tāsiʿa min al-fitan wa-l-futūḥ*, ed. Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad al-Maqḥafī (Ṣanʿāʾ: Markaz ʿAbbādī li-l-dirāsāt wa-l-nashr, 1424), 29.

Al-Shaṭabī is not a definitively tribal name, but a geographical *nisba.* Nevertheless, some early conclusion on the function of this scholarly family can be made based on a selection of biographies of people with the same *nisba* from Ibn Abī al-Rijāl. ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad al-Shaṭabī is not mentioned in any biographical dictionaries, unlike his possible relative ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. Mukābir al-Shaṭabī, who was likewise a teacher of the imam in Ṣanʿāʾ.[36] The fact that he died before the *daʿwa* of the imam is another reason that could explain why there is little attention to him in the biography of the imam. One could hypothesize, however, that at the very least ʿAbdallāh al-Shaṭabī, in addition to teaching the imam, could have provided the young Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn with a letter of recommendation to his relative in Ṣanʿāʾ.

So far, we examined the potential political connections of three teachers of the imam whom he encountered in Ẓafīr Ḥajja. These connections laid important groundwork for his future bid for power both in the sphere of scholarship and by building relationships with scholars with strong local attachments and potential links to Ṣanʿāʾ. Eventually, the teachers of the imam in the *hijra* established his status locally, in Ḥajja, and became his advisors and supporters in the early years of his imamate. The scholars that the imam encountered in Ṣanʿāʾ, unlike their counterparts in Ẓafīr, did not give any support to the imam politically. His Ṣanʿāʾ academic contacts appear innocent of political motivation. The imam was, however, able to use his years in the city to achieve several goals: to establish a respectable scholarly record, build up some alliances and connect to the imam.

Without a dated record of the imam's education, it is hard to establish in what order he met scholars in Ṣanʿāʾ. If the order of appearance in the *sīras* is of any indication, his earliest

[36] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr,* vol. 3, p. 198; al-Shahārī, *TZK*, vol. 2, pp. 704-706.

acquaintances came from the al-ʿUlufī family.[37] ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā b. Ṣāliḥ al-ʿUlufī took a liking to the young sayyid and helped him secure housing, clothes and food in Ṣanʿāʾ.[38] This scholar split his time between Ṣanʿāʾ and a residence in *hijrat* al-Abnāʾ in wādī al-Sirr in close vicinity to the city. [39] ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā b. Ṣāliḥ al-ʿUlufī is mentioned in the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* as a student of Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Wazīr.[40] This scholar seems to have been key for the ascent of Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn through the educational system, as he had an established link with one of the leading Zaydi thinkers of the Banū al-Wazīr, and connections to other scholars through his teacher and relatives from a scholarly family. The absence of these particular individuals, who are listed as shaykhs of the imam, in biographical dictionaries can be used as an indication of their middling status among Zaydi scholars. During the imam's reign, members of the family became closer to the ruler and benefited from his patronage. For example, Yūsuf b. Yaḥyā al-ʿUlufī copied a majority of the manuscripts that belonged to the imam,[41] and another member of the family authored his *sīra.*[42] After the Sharaf al-Dīn period the ʿUlufī family remained in the upper tiers of

[37] The al-ʿUlufī family claimed Qurashī and even Umayyad descent, but they were named after the *hijra* ʿUlufa in Ḥāshid territory in close proximity to the town Rayda (al-Bawn). Akwaʿ, *Hijar al-ʿilm,* vol. 3, p. 1444-45. This is confirmed in an ownership statement of a member of the family dated from 1056/1647, where the owner states that he is al-Qurashī al-Umawī by descent (*nasaban*) and al-ʿUlufī by locality (*baladan*). NF F.218.ar, f. 166b. Curiously, all three scholars of the al-ʿUlufī family listed in the *sīras* of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn are absent from Ibn Abī al-Rijāl's biographical dictionary.

[38] *wa waqaʿa minhu īnās li-l-imām wa qiyām kullī bi-aḥwālihi min amn al-maskan wa-l-malbas wa-l-maṭʿam. Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, f. 44a; al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, ff. 11b, 95b.

[39] Al-Akwaʿ, *Hijar al-ʿilm,* vol. 1, pp. 21-23.

[40] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, f. 44a.

[41] Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Muqrāʾī, *Maknūn al-sirr fī taḥrīr naḥārīr al-Sirr*, ed. Zayd b. ʿAlī al-Wazīr (McLean, VA: Markaz al-turāth wa-l-buḥūth al-yamanī, 2002), 149; al-Akwaʿ, *Hijar al-ʿilm*, vol. 3, p. 1445.

[42] There is some disagreement concerning the name of the biographer of the imam. Sources give the name Ḥasan b. Ḥusayn al-ʿUlufī, however, in the text of the *sīra* the author implies that his father was Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn and even states that Ḥasan b. Ḥusayn al-ʿUlufī is not

Zaydi elites. Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʿUlufī appears as a negotiator on behalf of the Shams al-Dīns in the Qasimid period; and other members of the family found their place in the Qasimid administration and patronized manuscript production.[43] This indicates that connections to the Sharaf al-Dīns served this scholarly family well in the long term.

Through ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā b. Ṣāliḥ al-ʿUlufī he could have been introduced to Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ẓafārī, another student of Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Wazīr.[44] The biography of this scholar proves elusive – Ibn Abī al-Rijāl remarks that there were two people of that name in Yemen at the time; one lived in Ḥadda and Ṣanʿāʾ, the other only in Ḥadda. From the *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr* we know that one of the two was in the circle of Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Wazīr together with ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā al-ʿUlufī.[45] Al-ʿUlufī mentions this person not only in the list of the teachers of the imam, but also among his supporters in Ṣanʿāʾ, who "advertise" his imamate.[46] He receives the *wilāya* (possibly, a governorship) from the imam, but the source is silent on the topic of the location of this *wilāya*.[47] In short, pro-Sharaf al-Dīn sources describe this scholar as a notable of Ṣanʿāʾ and a supporter of the imam.

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the author (al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, f. 88b). It is possible that the copyist Yūsuf b. Yaḥyā and the author of the *sīra* are the same person.

[43] al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 141b. An example of al-ʿUlufī patronage is NF E.394.ar, dated 1080/1669 (f. 218a - *bi-ʿināyat sayyidinā al-qāḍī al-allāma ḍiyāʾ al-dīn muḥyī ʿulūm al-āl al-akramīn ʿAbd al-Wāsiʿ b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Qurashī al-ʿUlufī*). In the period of imam al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl, Amīr al-Dīn b. Aḥmad al-ʿUlufī was the *wālī* of Shiḥr. Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn Ibn al-Qāsim, *al-Awḍāʿ al-siyāsīya fī-l-Yaman fī-l-niṣf al-thānī min al-qarn al-ḥādī ʿashar al-hijrī al-sābiʿ ʿashar al-mīlādī 1054-1099 / 1644-1688 maʿa taḥqīq Bahjat al-zaman fī tārīkh al-Yaman li-l-muʾarrikh Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn b. al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad*, ed. Amat al-Ghafūr ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿAlī al-Amīr (Ṣanʿāʾ: Muʾassasat al-imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-thaqāfīya, 2008), vol. 2, p. 862.

[44] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, f. 44a.

[45] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, f. 44a.

[46] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, f. 95b.

[47] Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 95b.

After studying with these two scholars, Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn was ready to meet a member of the Banū al-Wazīr, al-Hādī b. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Wazīr (d. 923/1517). He was a high-level scholar and one of the few from whom the imam, according to the sources, received an *ijāza*. Al-Hādī, though a well-connected sayyid in the city, was not able to assist the imam's political ambitions because in 910/1504, after the capture of Ṣanʿāʾ, he was removed by the Tahirid sultan first to Radāʿ and then to Taʿizz, where he died in 923/1517.[48] Perhaps, if this sayyid had been able to stay in the city, he would have been able to support the imam's bid for power and help him gain a stronger footing among the Ṣanʿāʾ elites.

After a period of study with al-Hādī b. Muḥammad, Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn entered the highest echelons of the Zaydi intellectual elite. This is signaled by the fact that the scholars he interacted with at this stage were top-level specialists, famous for their *ijāzas.* He studied with Qāsim b. Yūsuf b. Muʿawwiḍā al-Hānī, a scholar who had transmission rights from Yūsuf b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān and *qāḍī* Yaḥyā, the author of *al-Bayān.*[49] Another scholar with highly prized transmission rights was ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. Mukābir al-Shaẓabī. This scholar was a student of ʿAlī b. Zayd al-Shaẓabī (d. 877/1472), a faqīh who transmitted many key works of Zaydism with the *ijāzas* of imams and with *ijāzas* that connected him in a short chain of transmission to the authors. ʿAlī b. Zayd al-Shaẓabī was an important connecting figure for Zaydi scholars in Ṣanʿāʾ; among his students was the already mentioned al-Nāṣir b. Yaḥyā of the Banū al-Wazīr.[50] ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. Mukābir al-Shaẓabī is invariably listed as his best student and son-in-law. Some of these scholars were sought by the imam so he could obtain prized *ijāzas.* The biographies inform us of only four *ijāzas* that the imam received in his lifetime – all four in Ṣanʿāʾ. He received them from

[48] *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, ff. 35a, 43a, 44b, 45b-46b, 62a; NF C.35.ar, f. 42a
[49] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 4, p. 110; al-Shahārī, *TZK*, 873–74.
[50] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr,* vol. 3, pp. 239-241; al-Shahārī, *TZK* vol. 2, pp. 742-744.

two scholars of the Banū al-Wazīr, imam al-Manṣūr al-Sirājī and ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. Mukābir al-Shaẓabī.[51] In light of what we know of these scholars and the prestigious transmission lineages that they held, it is not surprising that the imam collected his certificates from them.

The question now is whether these top scholars had a double role in the fortune of Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, especially its political dimension. It seems that they were not directly involved in the political ascent of the imam. A good measure of this involvement is the list of supporters of the imam during the year of his *daʿwa.*[52] Five teachers of the imam are mentioned in that list as supporters – two from Ẓafīr and three from Ṣanʿāʾ. The Ṣanʿāʾ teachers mentioned include two members of the al-ʿUlufī clan and Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ẓafārī. None of the top-level scholars are on the list. Due to the 910/1504 capture of Ṣanʿāʾ by the Tahirids, the imam lost the support of two of his Banū al-Wazīr teachers, who were forcibly exiled from the city. ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā b. Mukābir al-Shaẓabī died five years before the *daʿwa.* Thus, if we assess the teachers of the imam as political assets, we must agree that he was somewhat out of luck. He most probably could have counted on the support of his Banū al-Wazīr teachers, as many other members of this illustrious family joined him. Without them, he was left with the less consequential al-ʿUlufī clan, whom he nevertheless closely engaged in his government.

One conspicuous absence from the list of Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's teachers in this period is the Mirghim family, the scholars of wādī Sirr. For several generations, this family resided as a quasi-dynasty in the *hijra*s surrounding Ṣanʿāʾ.[53] Many of the scholars who later supported imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn studied here with Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Mirghim

[51] Of these certificates, I have so far been able to discover only one – the *ijāza ʿāmma* from imam al-Manṣūr Sirājī. Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, ff. 13a-15b.
[52] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, ff. 92b-96a.
[53] al-Muqrāʾī, *Maknūn al-sirr*, 69–70, 74–77.

(d. 931/1525), the *qāḍī* of Ṣanʿāʾ and a well-respected scholar.[54] He successfully navigated the occupation of Ṣanʿāʾ first by the Tahirids, then by the Mamluks, always remaining a mediator between the rulers and the townspeople.[55] Despite his amicable relations with the Banū al-Wazīr, he supported the Āl al-Muʾayyad imams of Ṣaʿda.[56] The absence of such an important scholar in the list of teachers and early supporters of the imam indicates that, despite the efforts of the authors of the *sīra*s to present Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's rise to power as uncontested, there were strong opposition undercurrents.

The earliest forays of the imam into the intellectual sphere were not only beneficial for his scholarly profile but had political potential as well. This potential was not fully realized because of the Tahirid assault on Ṣanʿāʾ. The links that the imam built during his studies can be grouped into two categories: those that linked him to tribes and thus had more to do with realpolitik and those that took the shape of *ijāzas* that increased his prestige as a scholar. Both links catered to the political goals of the ambitious sayyid: they allowed him to develop a more secure base among the tribes and to increase his scholarly and symbolic capital. The benefit, however, was mutual. Those of the imam's teachers who lived to see his *daʿwa* became his supporters and received appointments in the new imamate. Because the imam already had strong connections to Ẓafīr Ḥajja, the scholars resident there were more willing to side with him. This was not the case with Ṣanʿāʾ, where Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, even as a scion of a notable family, was poor (thus the reliance on al-

[54] Among these students were Muḥammad b. Ḥamīd al-Muqrāʾī (see a *samāʿ* note from NF F.16.ar, f. 264a, dated 898/1493) and Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā Ibn Bahrān (*ijāza* in NF B.17.ar, ff. 163b-164b).
[55] *Tārīkh banī al-Wazī,r* NF D.556.ar, f. 47a; al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, f. 117b.
[56] Ibn al-Muʾayyad, *al-Tuḥfa al-ʿanbarīya,* NF D.451.ar, ff. 136a-137b; *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, f. 44a; al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, f. 250a.

ʿUlufī) and with no connections. And while some scholars, like al-Ẓafārī and al-ʿUlufī, sympathized with him, Ṣanʿāʾ was not the starting point of his political career.

The measure of success of the earliest networking of the imam can additionally be assessed by considering a list of supporters from the year of his *daʿwa* (912/1506).[57] It includes thirty-nine people: sixteen are sayyids, including members of the Banū al-Wazīr, Āl Filayta, and Āl al-Ḥamza,[58] with the exception of the Āl al-Muʾayyad, who at the time were supporting an imam from their own family. For eighteen a tribal background can be established. Seventeen people from this list bore the title *faqīh,* and none of them were sayyids. In addition, three of those mentioned in the list had the title of *qāḍī,* three had honorary titles without indication of profession and one was designated a *mutawalli al-ḥukm wa-l-qaḍāʾ,* effectively a kind of governor. Geographically, the list of supporters of the imam is split between Ẓafīr and Ṣanʿāʾ. The supporters in Ṣanʿāʾ include the teachers of the imam and the al-Naḥawī family. The Āl al-Naḥawī are an interesting case among these earliest supporters of the imam, as they held *qāḍī* positions in Ṣanʿāʾ during its Tahirid period. One of them even held a joint *qāḍī*-ship in Ṣanāʾ and Dhamār. The three members of this family had links to the Madhḥij tribal confederation in origin. In status they were an established scholarly family with connections to both the Banū al-Wazīr (through education) and the Āl al-Muʾayyad (through marriage).[59] The impression that one gains from this list is that the imam

[57] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, ff. 93b-96a. The list of all teachers, students and supporters of the imam can be found in the appendix.
[58] One notable supporter was sayyid Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad b. al-Hādī b. imam Yaḥyā b. Ḥamza, also known as al-Shawīʿ. No scholar himself, he is listed among the students of the imam. Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, f. 94a.
[59] Badr bint Muḥammad al-Naḥawī was married to the Muʾayyadī imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan b. ʿIzz al-Dīn. Ibn al-Muʾayyad, *al-Tuḥfa al-ʿanbarīya* NF D.451.ar f. 137b. The Muḥammad, who was her father, could have been Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Naḥawī, a supporter of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn. Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, f. 95a. As for the scholarly connections of the family, they are multiple. See *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, ff. 36a, 42a, 87a, 93b, 111b.

succeeded in building a support group in the close vicinity of Ṣanʿāʾ and in his home base of Ẓafīr. However, he still needed to work to expand his network and political outreach. Once again in this project, scholars were assigned an important role. Through the medium of Islamic education, the imam was able to build and foster links to an ever-expanding group of people.

Expanding the scholarly and political network

After the imam's education was completed, he continued to spend a large portion of his career engaged in scholarly matters, predominantly as a teacher and transmitter of texts. The enterprise of transmission of knowledge was not purely intellectual. As has been shown earlier, Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's teachers were useful both as scholars and as potential political intermediaries. Similarly, sessions in which the imam taught had a political function: the local literati had a chance to confirm that the new ruler met the requirements of the imamate, and to acquire a valuable scholarly credential. In this section we will consider several study sessions and assess the place of such study sessions in the political process. The first step of the imam after his *daʿwa* was to set out on a tour in the Ḥajja region (see chapter 1). This tour had multiple purposes – this was a recognizance trip, an assessment of available resources, a procedure of tax collection, and an opportunity to network with local elites. An important component of these itinerant years was the meetings with the scholars.

The first such meeting occurred when the imam reached Dhahbān Banī Thawb. There he was joined by a delegation of scholars from the *hijra* ʿIrr Thawmān.[60] The brothers Muḥammad

[60] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, f. 101a. ʿIrr Thawmān is a *hijra* located in the mountains west of Ṣanʿāʾ, in the area known as al-Shāḥidhīya. al-Akwaʿ, *Hijar al-ʿilm*, vol. 3, pp. 2297–98.

and ʿAlī b. Dāwud al-Akhāwī al-Ḥayyī[61] came to test the imam together with faqīhs Qāsim al-Ẓāhirī and ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. Shās.[62] These scholars had no previous alliances with the imam; in fact, they were initially supportive of other candidates for the imamate. Muḥammad b. Dāwud al-Ḥayyī, was a supporter of the imam ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Muʾayyadī,[63] and hid brother ʿAlī b. Dāwud was a *wazīr* of imam Muṭahhar b. Sulaymān.[64] The scholars and the imam spent several days in intellectual duels. During these sessions, imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn was subjected to an examination at the end of which the scholars recognized his authority and expressed their support for him.[65] After the debates, the imam was welcome to come to the *hijra* and teach there. According to al-ʿUlufī, once in the *hijra,* the imam spent his time teaching the *Kitāb al-Kashshāf* at the local mosque.[66] Sadly, we do not have a source that provides a list of the attendees at these teaching sessions. One possible student in those sessions could be sayyid ʿAbdallāh b. Qāsim al-ʿAlawī (d. 960/1553).[67] There is information that in 912/1506 he was in Ẓafīr, studying with some teachers of the imam, and that around that time he studied *al-Kashshāf* with the imam.[68] Until a study

61. Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 4, p. 298; Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, vol. 3, pp. 238–39. The Āl al-Ḥayyī continued their illustrious career, producing in the later centuries scholars and supporters of the Qasimid imamate. al-Akwaʿ, *Hijar al-ʿilm*, vol. 3, pp. 2299–2300.

62 I have not been able to find information about these scholars yet.

63 Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 4, p. 298.

64 Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, vol. 2, p. 266.

65 A fact that al-ʿUlufī dutifully stresses that these sessions were important because the scholars were the 'greatest of that time': *waqaʿa li-amr ṭāʿatihim mawqiʿ ʿaẓīm fī qulūb al-ʿulamāʾ wa-l-aʿwāmm liʾannahum kānū aʿẓam man baqiya min akābir al-ʿulamāʾ al-fuḍalāʾ fī zamānihim.* Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, f. 101b. See also Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal, *Al-Sulūk al-dhahabīya fī khulāṣat al-sīra al-mutawakkilīya*, ed. Zayd b. ʿAlī al-Fuḍayl, 1st ed. (Jidda: Maṭbaʿat al-mafāhīm li-l-ṭibāʿa wa-l-taṣāmīm, 2012), 100. Ibn Abī al-Rijāl describes the al-Ḥayyī brothers as leading scholars of the time. Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 4, p. 298; Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, vol. 3, pp. 238–39.

66 Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, f. 101b. The *Kitāb al-Kashshāf* in question is the *tafsīr* of al-Zamakhsharī.

67 al-Shahārī, *TZK*, vol. 2, p. 626 ff.

68 al-Shahārī, vol. 2, p. 627.

certificate of this scholar is available, we can only hypothesize that he could have been present at the study sessions in ʿIrr Thawmān. There was certainly a purely intellectual component to this enterprise, however, one must also underline the political aspect of these sessions. The scholars of this *hijra,* influential due to their achievements as well as their connections, through these sessions became part of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate as a political system.

After this initial spurt of activity, there is a gap in mentions of study sessions until the 930s/1520s (see chapter 1). The next stage of the imam's scholarly activity was closely related to his ambition to subjugate Ṣaʿda and the Āl al-Muʾayyad. Undated visits of the imam to Hijrat al-Abnāʾ, during which he met with the pro-Muʾayyad Mirghim scholarly family and their students,[69] could have been part of this strategy. The teaching activities of 935/1529, that coincided with the completion of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's own scholarly work, *al-Athmār fī fiqh al-aʾimma al-aṭhār*, appear as another element of the preparation for the conquest of Ṣaʿda. The completion of *al-Athmār* was accompanied by a 'promotion campaign'; commentaries, authored by close supporters of the imam, were commissioned and the text was transmitted by the author in study sessions. In 935-36/1529-30 the imam taught Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. Rāwiʿ, a qāḍī and brother of one of the three commentators on this new work – ʿAlī b. ʿAbdallāh b. Rāwiʿ (d. 959/1552), chief *qāḍī* of Ṣanʿāʾ.[70] ʿAlī b. ʿAbdallāh b. Rāwiʿ composed two commentaries on the imam's book at his request, seemingly shortly after 935/1529.[71] Another commentary was written by *qāḍī* Muḥammad b. ʿAṭfallāh al-ʿAbsī.[72] These scholars were not simply important intellectual allies

[69] al-Muqrāʾī, *Maknūn al-sirr*, 136–37.
[70] Al-Shahārī, *TZK,* vol. 2, pp. 1011-1014.
[71] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr,* vol. 3, p. 282; al-Akwaʿ, *Hijar al-ʿilm,* vol. 1, p. 488.
[72] Rauch mentions four commentaries on *Athmār al-azhār;* their chronology is, however, unclear. Christoph Rauch, "Zaydī Scholars on the Move: A Multitext Manuscript by Yaḥyā Ibn Ḥumayd al-Muqrāʾī (b. 908/1503, d. 990/1582) and Other Contemporary Sources," in *The Yemeni Manuscript Tradition*, ed. Christoph Rauch, David Hollenberg, and Sabine Schmidtke (Brill,

for the imam, they were also his political supporters. They represent the crème de la crème of Zaydi scholarly elite at the time.[73] ʿAlī b. ʿAbdallāh b. Rāwiʿ was a leading scholar of his age, as biographical dictionaries attest; although not a prolific writer, he and his brother Muḥammad boasted high-level expertise as well as connections to the Khawlān tribes.[74] Qāḍī Muḥammad b. ʿAṭfallāh al-ʿAbsī (also known as al-ʿAbbāsī and al-Barakī) was a governor (*ḥākim*) of the imam and worked in his chancellery.[75] His connection – through the Banū al-ʿAbbās tribe – to the second wife of the imam, Tāj al-Bahāʾ bint shaykh Shams al-Dīn (see chapter 4) also secured him the position of tutor to the imam's firstborn, Muṭahhar b. imam Shams al-Dīn.[76] The scholarly activities of the imam in the years preceding the capture of Ṣaʿda can be seen as a stepping stone in his military and diplomatic planning. The promotion of the imam's own work by leading scholars confirmed his claims to leadership and *ijtihād.* The top-ranking Zaydi scholars who were engaged with the work of the imam at this time became an integral part of his political project.

After the conquest of Ṣaʿda study sessions dedicated to the imam's work were an integral component of the appeasement of the Āl al-Muʾayyad and other local elites. The first study session took place shortly after the conquest, in Jumādā – Shawwāl 940 / May 1534 and was facilitated by Ḥasan al-Zurayqī, the second biographer of the imam. The occasion of studying *al-Athmār* was

2015), 207-08. Given the political differences between the imam and the Ṣaʿda scholars I would venture to assume that Ibn Bahrān's and al-Muqrāʾī's commentaries were composed after 940/1533, and thus will discuss these scholars below.

[73] Their biographies confirm their shared scholarly links. See for example Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr,* vol. 4, pp. 510-11, a list of teachers of Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Ḥārithī, with strong overlaps with both the teachers of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn himself and other scholars in this group.

[74] al-Muqrāʾī, *Maknūn al-sirr*, 130–31.

[75] Al-Muqrāʾī, *Maknūn al-sirr,* p. 100; al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, ff. 72b, 90b. From this latter position we have a sample of a letter that he issued in his capacity as *munshī* to the sayyids of Āl al-Muʿayyad. NF A.26.ar, f. 30b.

[76] al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, f. 72b.

used by the imam and the political elites of Ṣaʿda as an opportunity to start building trust. The elite character of the study sessions is clear from the list of attendees. Al-Zurayqī, who was allied with the Āl al-Muʾayyad before 940/1533, mentions that the first session involved the *qāḍī* of Saʿda ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Ḥābis al-Dawwārī, faqīhs Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Jibrīl, Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Muqrāʾī al-Ḥārithī al-Madhḥijī, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Qādir b. Muḥammad al-Dhamārī, and Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā Ibn Bahrān.[77] It is possible that another scholar of importance in Ṣaʿda at the time and with connections in the Tihāma, Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḍamadī (d. 988/1580), was also present.[78] These scholars represented the Ṣaʿda elites. The Āl al-Dawwārī were linked to Ḥārith tribes residing in the region and was connected to the Āl al-Muʾayyad through marriage, and a member of this family held official posts in the Āl al-Muʿayyad government.[79] The importance of the Bahrān clan is confirmed by the fact, recorded by Ibn Abī al-Rijāl, that the imam was courting him with gifts even before this scholar pronounced his allegiance to the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate.[80] Imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn was represented in this session by his grandsons, Yaḥyā b. Ḥasan and Yaḥyā b. Aḥmad, and a distant relative through the Banū al-Wazīr,

[77] NF B.17.ar, f. 6a; al-Zurayqī, *Sīrat al-imām,* ÖNB Glaser 39, f. 24b.
[78] This speculation is based on a 940/1533-34 *ijāza* of the imam to Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā Ibn Bahrān and his student Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḍamadī, mentioned in al-Shahārī, *TZK*, vol. 2, pp. 1039, 1104. Al-Ḍamadī gave *bayʿa* to imam al-Hādī Aḥmad b. imam ʿIzz al-dīn prior to the 940/1533 surrender of Ṣaʿda and continued to support the imams from Āl al-Muʾayyad after the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate. *Mulḥaq al-bassāma al-ṣughrā,* NF C.112.ar, f. 76a; Ibn al-Muʾayyad, *al-Tuḥfa al-ʿanbarīya,* NF D.451.ar, ff. 141a, 145b; al-Lawzī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Nāṣir,* NF D.545.ar, ff. 42ab.
[79] al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 1, pp. 383, 629. Fāṭima bint Ṣalāḥ al-Dawwārī was the mother of imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Dāwūd, a later Āl al-Muʾayyad imam. al-Lawzī, *Sīrat imam al-Nāṣir,* NF B.35.ar, f. 49a. The brother of qāḍī al-Dawwārī, Yaḥyā b. Aḥmad b. ʿAlī, was responsible for tax collection in the Ṣaʿda region. Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal, *Al-Sulūk al-dhahabīya*, 255; al-Muqrāʾī, *Maknūn al-sirr*, 93–94.
[80] Al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam,* vol. 1, p. 198; Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr,* vol. 4, pp. 398-400.

Ṣalāḥ b. Muḥammad b. ʿAyshān.[81] It is quite possible that the scholar and official of the imam Muḥammad b. ʿAṭfallāh al-ʿAbsī was also present at this study session.[82] The presence of pro-Sharaf al-Dīn and pro-Muʾayyad scholars makes the session appear as an occasion for diplomacy and negotiation between the two elite groups. The only people who were absent from this intellectual encounter were the Āl al-Muʾayyad themselves. It is possible that the high-ranking Ṣaʿda scholars laid the groundwork for future negotiations, but the conversation was delayed by the 941/1535 plague that took the lives of several important scholars, including members of the Āl al-Muʾayyad.[83] Nevertheless, the 940/1534 meeting facilitated the follow-up 943/1537 study session in Ṣaʿda during which the Āl al-Muʾayyad were present.[84] Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Muqrāʾī, who by then had written a commentary on the imam's *al-Athmār,* acted as a mediator during this second session that sealed the new alliance between the Ṣaʿda elites and imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn.[85]

In the following years, as the aging imam Sharaf al-Dīn had to face the question of power transition (see chapter 1), he once again used study session to convey a political message. In ramaḍān 948/January 1542, when he was preparing to transmit power to his son ʿAlī, the imam organized a study session on one of the foundational works of Zaydism, the *Majmūʿ al-fiqh* by Zayd b. ʿAlī. The main teacher was the imam's son. This study session offers some clues on who constituted the top political echelon of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate and gave their approval of the

[81] Al-Zurayqī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* ÖNB Glaser 39, f. 24b; Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal, *Al-Sulūk al-dhahabīya*, 217. The niece of sayyid Ṣalāḥ b. Muḥammad b. ʿAyshān married into the Banū al-Wazīr. *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, f. 32b.
[82] This speculation is based on the fact that the faqīh travelled with the imam to Ṣaʿda. Al-Zurayqī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* ÖNB Glaser 39, ff. 24b, 26b.
[83] al-Muqrāʾī, *Maknūn al-sirr*, 94.
[84] Christoph Rauch, "Zaydī Scholars on the Move: A Multitext Manuscript by Yaḥyā Ibn Ḥumayd al-Miqrāʾī (b. 908/1503, d. 990/1582) and Other Contemporary Sources," in *The Yemeni Manuscript Tradition*, ed. Christoph Rauch, David Hollenberg, and Sabine Schmidtke (Brill, 2015), 203–26.
[85] Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal, *Al-Sulūk al-dhahabīya*, 278.

imam's plan.[86] Nine people are listed among the participants: four sayyids and five non-sayyid scholars (one *qāḍī* and four faqīhs). *Qāḍī* Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh Ibn Rāwiʿ, the author of the *sīra* of the imam Ḥasan al-Zurayqī, and a commentator of the imam's work Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Muqrāʾī were all present. Other participants included sayyids, members of the Banū al-Wazīr and relatives of the imam. These people were the core supporters of the imam's plan. This we can assess based on the list of witnesses of the imam's *istikhlāf* statement issued in 952/1545 that appointed ʿAlī as heir.[87] Al-Zurayqī was one of the witnesses of the will of the imam, alongside *qāḍī* Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh Ibn Rāwiʿ and al-Muqrāʾī.[88] Al-Muqrāʾī remained loyal to ʿAlī b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn in subsequent years and resided with him in Dhī Marmar.[89] Other scholars with connections to the imam are also on the list, including members of the al-ʿUlufī and the Dhū Ḥiwāl families discussed earlier.[90] Even though the *istikhlāf* document was highly divisive, the core support group of the imam that he had built over his years of study and teaching remained loyal to him.

[86] Berlin, Glaser 16, ff. 2a-3a.
[87] Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF D.545.ar, f. 31ab. The witnesses of the *istikhlāf* were Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Zurayqī, faqih Aḥmad b. Ismāʿīl, sayyid Muṭahhar b. Muḥammad b. Tāj al-Dīn al-Ḥamzī, sayyid ʿAbdallāh b. Qasim b. al-Hādī al-ʿAlawī, sayyid Aḥmad b. Ṣalāḥ al-Shaẓabī, faqīh Ṣalāḥ b. Dāwud b. ʿAlī Ibn Dāʿir al-Marhibī, qadi Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. Rāwiʿ, qadi Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Maswarī, faqih Muḥammad b. Masʿūd al-Ḥiwālī, faqih Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. Ḥumayd al-Muqrāʾī, faqih Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Ḥadaqa, faqih Ṣalāḥ b. Ṣiddīq al-Namāzī, faqih Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad al-ʿUlufī, faqih Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. Muṭīr, his son ʿAlī b. Muḥammad, faqih Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. Dāwud, qadi Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Salāma, faqīh Nājī b. Sulayman al-Mujāhid.
[88] Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF D.545.ar f. 31ab.
[89] al-Muqrāʾī, *Maknūn al-sirr*, 145.
[90] Among the witnesses are members of the Muṭīr scholarly family who were related to al-Muqrāʾī; and members of the al-Ḥiwālī family, discussed earlier. Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF D.545.ar, f. 31b.

Scholars in the Sharaf al-Dīn administration

In the pre-Ottoman period, Zaydi scholars preferred to keep a distance from the court of the imam – there is little overlap between the *wazīr*s and secretaries (*kātib*s) of the imam who were by necessity educated people and the scholars who came into his orbit as teachers and students. Informal positions of advisors and mediators with the tribes and posts such as those of a *qāḍī* or *ḥākim* in a town that implied significant autonomy from the imam were preferred by these scholar-statesmen. Scholars also maintained their autonomy in the administration of *waqf*s.

The highest administrative position to which a scholar could aspire in pre-Ottoman Zaydi Yemen was that of the *wazīr.* While the title of *wazīr* does not often appear in the pages of Zaydi sources, the post existed in the pre-Ottoman period and was a prestigious one for a scholar and a sayyid to hold. Indeed, the Banū al-Wazīr are named after an ancestor who took such a position (see chapter 4). The *wazīr*s were usually scholars rather than sayyids. This is at least the evidence that we have from the Rasulid period, during which scholars and especially *qāḍī*s would reach this rank, including members of the Nāẓirī family who eventually joined imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn. Another piece of evidence from the period shortly before the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate is that imam al-Manṣūr Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Sirājī in his 908/1503 visit to Ṣaʿda travelled with a retinue that included a *wazīr*.[91] I was, however, unable to find information about the identity of this *wazīr* of the imam. The lack of appeal of the position of *wazīr* to scholars is an old topos in Islamic history. In the Qasimid period, the high-ranking and powerful *qāḍī* Aḥmad b. Saʿd al-Dīn al-Maswarī still found it relevant to copy a remark of Niẓām al-Mulk, the famous Seljuq *wazīr,* on how the post of the *wazīr* was worse than that of a green-grocer (*baqqāl*).[92]

[91] Al-Muʾayyadī, *al-Tuḥfa al-ʿanbarīya,* NF D.451.ar ,f. 139b.
[92] NF F.203.ar, f. 9b.

The secretary, *kātib,* of the imam, could potentially be a scholar. Ironically, the only *kātib* of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn that we know of was not a scholar, but a *mawlā,* a released slave, called ʿUthmān. Given his position as "writing hand" of the imam, he could have been expected to have elegant handwriting and an ability to express the content in an elaborate wording, worthy of an imam. He did not need to be dictated the texts, but could just be told what type of document to draw up.[93] The *kātib* was expected to be constantly by the imam's side – a position that could not have looked appealing to scholars. We do, however, have information about *kātib*s of sayyid scholarly families (see chapter 4). This might be an indication of two things: firstly, the lack of a sophisticated bureaucracy in the pre-Ottoman period that could be an appealing career track for a scholar, whether of sayyid origins or not. Secondly, it could also indicate that in the absence of a centralized bureaucracy, important documents were produced in an ad hoc manner. However, they needed to be written up by people with a scholarly background as the only form of recognizably legitimate documentation was what corresponded to *sharīʿa* requirements.

Positions as judges (*qāḍī*) and governors (*ḥākim*) were more appealing for scholars in the Sharaf al-Dīn period and earlier. These posts gave their holders significant autonomy from the imam and from any other central government. Some scholars who held such positions were able to maintain them in transitional periods, when the central authority changed. For example, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Naḥawī was first appointed by the Tahirids as *qāḍī* of Ṣanʿāʾ and Dhamār (*al-mutawallī li-l-ḥukm wa-l-qaḍāʾ fī Ṣanʿāʾ wa Dhamār*). But even as a Tahirid official he expressed support for imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn and was thus able to keep his position when the Tahirid rule in Yemen came ended.[94]

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[93] *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, f. 84a. In the episode he draws up a release permission for an imprisoned sayyid.
[94] al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, f. 95b,

Powerful *qāḍī*s could shift their alliances with impunity and still maintain their posts. Muḥammad b. ʿAṭfallāh b. ʿAlī al-ʿAbbāsī al-Barakī, mentioned earlier as the student of imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn and a commentator of his work, was a *ḥākim* in his administration. However, prior to this appointment, he was close enough to the Ṣaʿda-based Āl al-Muʾayyad to act as a *munshī* of a letter from sayyid Majd al-Dīn b. Ḥasan b. al-imām ʿIzz al-Dīn.[95] Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Mirghim, the *qāḍī* of Ṣanʿāʾ, was not a huge supporter of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate. Before imam Sharaf al-Dīn he first sided with imam al-Nāṣīr Ḥasan b. ʿIzz al-Dīn, then with imam al-Manṣūr Muḥammad al-Sirājī. There is no indication in the sources that he proclaimed his support for imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn. He does appear, however, in the pages of his *sīra* as a respectable and affluent Ṣanʿāʾ notable.[96] Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muẓaffar was a pre-Sharaf al-Dīn *qāḍī* who facilitated the rise of imam al-Manṣūr al-Sirājī choosing to support him rather than imam al-Nāṣīr Ḥasan b. ʿIzz al-Dīn of the Āl al-Muʾayyad.[97] These examples demonstrate the importance of *qāḍī*s in the pre-Ottoman Zaydi political system and their ability to keep their influence in times of regime change.

In addition to appointments, scholars also exercised a significant if informal influence on the Zaydi state. One informal role of the scholars was connected to their control of *waqf*s and their authority when it came to questions of taxation and redistribution. The few glimpses that we have of this dimension of the scholars' activities in pre-Ottoman Yemen is telling. *Qāḍī* Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muẓaffar fell out with the Āl al-Muʾayyad briefly because of disagreements on the issue of *zakāt* collection. The *zakāt* of bilād Ḥamida, an area close to the town of Rayda, was redirected

[95] *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, f. 54a, NF C.35.ar, f. 24b; al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, ff. 72b, 90b. The letter: NF A.26.ar, f. 30b.
[96] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, f. 117b.
[97] Ibn al-Muʾayyad, *al-Tuḥfa al-ʿanbarīya,* NF D.451.ar, ff. 136b, 138b.

to the future imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan during the imamate of his father imam al-Hādī ʿIzz al-Dīn.[98] The *qāḍī* was eager to control this location because the area was the seat of his family.[99] And even though the imam compensated the *qāḍī* by doubling (*iḍʿāf*) his income, he kept the grudge. It is most probably in connection with this issue that he had an exchange with imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn on questions concerning *waqf* management (unfortunately, I have been only able to locate an undated response of the imam).[100] Scholars who controlled income streams would not tolerate state intervention in their finances.

A measure of what kind of power over financial sources we are talking about can be gleaned from *Maknūn al-sirr* which provides a detailed list of waqfs in the *hijra*s of wādī al-Sirr. The *waqfs* were predominantly arable land used for growing grapes (*qaṣbat al-ʿinab*) and fields (*jirba*), as well as portions of harvests all used for the support of the mosques in the area. *Waqf*s dedicated directly for the support of individuals (for example scholars or the poor) included houses and housing units.[101] People from various backgrounds – scholars and tribesmen, women of various backgrounds[102], members of the Mirghim family[103], the al-ʿUlufī family, [104] and the author himself (al-Muqrāʾī) – all relied on *waqf*s.[105] In some cases the endowment of the mosque was enhanced through land acquisitions – for instance, the mosque of al-Abnā acquired land from the

[98] Ibn al-Muʾayyad, *al-Tuḥfa al-ʿanbarīya,* NF D.451.ar, f. 136.
[99] al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 1, p. 502.
[100] NF A.26.ar, ff. 41a-42a.
[101] al-Muqrāʾī, *Maknūn al-sirr*, 177. One example of such a waqf lists half a small house (*niṣf al-bayt al-ṣaghīr*) and three housing units (*thalāthat manāzil fī-l-bayt al-kabīr*).
[102] Kitāb bint Yaʿīsh and Badra bint ʿAbdallāh b. Musāʿid al-Shāmī, for example. al-Muqrāʾī, 164,178.
[103] Maryam bint Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā Mirghim and her brother qāḍī Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Mirghim, Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad Mirghim, ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā Mirghim, Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad Mirghim. al-Muqrāʾī, 165, 178–79.
[104] Faqīh Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbdallāh al-ʿUlufī, Ibrāhīm b. Ḥasan b. Ṣāliḥ al-ʿUlufī. al-Muqrāʾī, 163, 176.
[105] al-Muqrāʾī, 166, 172.

tribeswoman Saʿīda bint al-Juhalī.[106] The managers of the *waqf* properties included the person responsible for the mosque (*mutawallī ʿalā-l-masjid).*[107] In some cases, local waqfs were managed externally: a *waqf* endowed for the benefit of all people residing in the area was managed by the *ḥākim* of Ṣanʿāʾ.[108] The Mirghim family *waqf* was written up in such a way that its management would not fall into the hands of any other family.[109] To complicate matters even further, some local *waqf*s were dedicated for the benefit of people residing outside wādī al-Sirr.[110]

With this information in mind, if we look at al-Muqrāʾī's will in which he lists his properties, several things appear of importance. This rather typical Zaydi scholar of the time was a landowner; the lists of fields and vineyards that he owned in wādī al-Sirr and Sanḥān is several pages long.[111] In Ṣanʿāʾ, he owned a house that he left to the unmarried women of his family, a *ḥānūt* in the Sūq al-Ḥaddādīn, and an empty lot (*ʿarṣa*).[112] The family *waqf* is about three times larger than the *waqf* for unrestricted use and this includes small portions of income (like three tenths of the income of the *ḥānūt* to be used for prayers in memory of relatives).[113] His book collection was also designated as family *waqf* for the benefit of those male descendants who pursued scholarly careers.[114] The variety of property held by the scholar and the uses of the endowments that he established demonstrate that *waqf* was one of the best tools available at the time to transfer wealth and

[106] al-Muqrāʾī, 164.
[107] al-Muqrāʾī, 163.
[108] al-Muqrāʾī, 174.
[109] al-Muqrāʾī, 178: *jaʿalā al-wilāya ʿalā dhālika ilā-l-aqrab al-ṣāliḥ wa lā wilāya li-ghayrihim maʿa wujūdihim … jaʿalā al-maṣraf man kān qarābatihimā muḥīy wa muqīm fī-l-masājid al-madhkūra wa-li-man huwa kadhālika in yadkhur kifāyat al-sana bi-dhalika-l-sharṭ wa lā ḥaẓẓa li-ghayrihim maʿa wujūd aḥad minhum ʿalā dhālika-l-ṣifa.*
[110] al-Muqrāʾī, 174
[111] al-Muqrāʾī, 180, 182-184
[112] al-Muqrāʾī, 185-186
[113] al-Muqrāʾī, 185.
[114] al-Muqrāʾī, 186.

status between generations.[115] The management of this property required a high level of administrative and legal literacy, and therefore control over *waqf* management was a powerful position for a scholar.

Another dimension of the scholars' informal involvement in the state was their relations with the tribes. In a way, scholars were informal representatives of tribal interests. Due to their tribal background and the fact that many of them resided in the *hijra*s in tribal territories, the scholars maintained close links to the tribal population of Yemen. Despite their education in Islamic sciences, the loyalties of the scholars, especially those residing outside of large educational centers, seem to have lain with their tribal families, rather than the authority of the imam. In an episode recounted as a miraculous deed *(karāma)* of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, faqīh Ṣalāḥ b. ʿAlī al-Ḥajūrī comes to the imam with a delegation from Kuḥlān Bawṣān. Even though the delegation also included the tribal 'big men' (*kibār*), it was the scholar who made decisions for the whole delegation. When he did not get from the negotiations with the imam what he wanted, he recalled the whole delegation.[116]

Establishing connections with the scholars residing in *hijra*s was an important component of the imam's political program in the first years of rule. For example, the imam build connections with faqīh Dāwūd b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥaymī al-Ḥaṣbānī, whom al-ʿUlufī describes as the lord (*ṣāḥib*) of ʿIrr banī al-Aʿḍab in Ḥayma.[117] This faqīh of whom little is known was a relative of the wife of the imam's grandfather, imam al-Mahdī Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā, and came from the *hijra* Ḥaṣbān in the Ḥarāz region, where the grandfather of the imam resided.[118] This faqih was able to provide imam

[115] See Hovden, *Waqf in Zaydi Yemen*, 2019, chap. 5 (pp. 186-254).
[116] al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, f. 77b.
[117] Al-ʿUlufī, NF A.3.ar, f. 101b; al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 2, p. 1034.
[118] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, f. 101b; al-Akwaʿ, *Hijar al-ʿilm*, 2218; al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 1, p. 469.

Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn with a path to power in the Ḥarāz region. In another episode, in 923/1517, shortly after capturing Thulā, the imam invited a delegation from Dhamār. The delegation included representatives of all political elite groups – a sayyid, two scholars (a *qāḍī* and a faqīh) and a tribal shaykh. The two scholars were faqīh ʿAlī b. Ṣāliḥ al-Ḍāwī and *qāḍī* ʿAbdallāh b. Muʿawwiḍa al-Ruṣābī.[119] The faqīh was, as his *nisba* indicates, a member of the Dhū Ḍāwī, a subgroup of Ṣubāra, a part of the tribal coalition of Sufyān.[120] The *qāḍī* came from Ruṣāba.[121] Neither of them appears in any biographical dictionaries; however, their presence among the delegates from Dhamār indicates that imam al-Mutawakkil considered them important representatives of the local community possibly not the least due to their links to the tribes of the region.

The image that we have gained of the pre-Ottoman Zaydi literati amounts to the following: these men acquired status through study by building personal networks all across Yemen. Their status was recognized by the tribes among which they reside in *hijra*s. The scholars were important players in the political sphere. Their wrath, as in the case of qāḍī Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muẓaffar, could lead to an overturning of the fortunes of an imam. Imams sought the support of scholars through study and teaching. In return, scholars promoted the imams using their local authority and the authority within the scholarly network. Hence, scholars-allies could bring to the imam many supporters and in return they rarely sought appointments but rather guarantees that the income streams under their control would remain untouched by the state. As long as the state had low levels of bureaucratization, scholars had little interest in participating in its affairs. The Ottoman period changed this status quo.

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[119] Al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil,* NF A.3.ar, f. 116a.
[120] al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 1, p. 937.
[121] Ruṣāba is located in Qāʿ Jahrān north of Dhamār. al-Maqḥafī, vol. 1, p. 690.

Zaydi literati and the state during the 'Ottoman century'

The 'Ottoman century' provided Zaydi scholars and literati with new possibilities through closer association with the state. This had to do with the Ottoman bureaucratic system that the conquerors brought with them.. By the time of the first conquest of Yemen in 1535 the divisions between the *ilmiye* and the *kalemiye* career tracks, i.e. the professional path of a scholar who would usually take up qāḍī positions, and the professional positions in the financial branch (*maliye*) and chancellery, were not yet fully developed, but were very well in the making. [122] When Ottoman power was reasserted under Koca Sinan Pasha (1568-1571) these tracks were fully developed. The Ottomans thus brought with them and implemented in Yemen for half a century a complicated bureaucratic system that employed literate, well-educated people in three capacities – as judges, financial specialists, and as chancery specialists. All three career tracks required sophisticated training and high levels of literacy.[123] This system and the people employed in it made a great impression on the local literati and scholars.

The Ottoman scholars who travelled to Yemen as part of the Ottoman bureaucratic system were a new type of person to the eyes of their Zaydi counterparts. Their knowledge of multiple languages combined with literary and calligraphic skills were a novelty in Yemen. Several things were particularly noticeable about these new scholars: they had a fixed rank and a corresponding fixed salary that they received from the state; and they performed complicated tasks in the Ottoman administration (maintenance of registers, financial and chancery tasks) while retaining their status of experts in Islamic religious sciences.

[122] Abdurrahman Atçil, *Scholars and Sultans in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 188–211.
[123] Cornell Fleischer, "Preliminaries to the Study of Ottoman Bureaucracy," *Journal of Turkish Studies*, no. 10 (1986): 135–41.

We do not have enough information to reconstruct the biographies of the Ottoman scholars-bureaucrats who appear in the pages of the Yemen *defters*. We do, however, have non-documentary sources that allow us to draw up an approximate portrait of some of the scholars who came to Yemen. One such outstanding scholar-bureaucrat of this period was *defterdār* Muṣṭafā Rumūzī, the author of a voluminous poetical work on the conquest of Yemen.[124] He was born in Istanbul, in approximately 927/1521, and was well educated in the *kalemiye* track, mastering Arabic and Persian in addition to his native Turkish. Based on a remark in the *Tārikh-i fetḥ-i Yemen,* he studied in the circle of the Edirne-based scholar and poet Emrûllāh.[125] He pursued an administrative career, first in Istanbul, where he seems to have been an employee of the *başdefterdār*'s *varidāt* office, then in the financial department of Egypt, where he was a *muḥāsebeci*.[126] Having proved his worth under three pashas in Egypt, he was appointed to Yemen and was thus a witness of the events of the re-conquest of the region. Koca Sinān Pasha entrusted Rumūzī with the composition of the work in exchange for the position of *defterdār*.[127] Rumūzī thus participated in the 977/1569 reconquest, taking up diplomatic functions in the negotiations with Muṭahhar b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn.[128]

[124] Rumūzī's history of Koca Sinān Pasha's expedition to Yemen, *Tārikh-i fetḥ-i Yemen,* is accessible in a critical edition. See Yavuz Hulûsi, *Yemen'de Osmanlı idâresi ve Rumûzî târihi (923-1012/1517-1604)*, 2 vols. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2003).
[125] Hulûsi, vol. 1, p. ccxxix–ccxxx.
[126] Hulûsi, vol. 1, p. ccxxxi.
[127] This is the interpretation of the context of the work's composition in Muṣṭafā ʿAlī's *Künhü'l-Akhbār*, cited in Hulûsi, vol. 1, p. ccxxx; Emine Fetvacı, *Picturing History at the Ottoman Court* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2013), 220.
[128] Hulûsi, *Yemen'de Osmanlı idâresi ve Rumûzî târihi (923-1012/1517-1604)*, vol. 1, p. ccxxxi; Quṭb al-Dīn al-Nahrawālī, *Lightning over Yemen. A History of the Ottoman Campaign, 1569-71*, trans. Clive Smith (London / New York: I.B.Tauris, 2002), 170.

Another scholar-bureaucrat of whom a lot is known from non-Ottoman sources is Muṣṭafā b. Ṭāhir.[129] Before his arrival in Yemen he was the *qāḍī* of Tirhala sanjak (Thessaly, modern Greece) and the surveyor (*müfettiş*) of tax farms (*has mukataatı*).[130] He held this position until 988/1580.[131] He arrived in Yemen together with Ḥasan Pasha in 989/1581. Al-Duʿāmī consistently calls Muṣṭafā b. Ṭāhir an *amīr*, in recognition of the *askeri* class to which this *qāḍī* belonged,[132] and praises his knowledge of *uṣūl* and of *ʿilm al-maʿqūl wa-l-manqūl,* i.e. not only of religious sciences, but also of algebra and geometry.[133] The Yemeni author stresses his skills at producing and interpreting fatwas in the Ḥanafī madhhab.[134] Muṣṭafā b. Ṭāhir's good handwriting and skills at literary composition of official documents also produced an impression on his Zaydi contemporary.[135] In Yemen his official responsibilities included, in addition to the tasks of *defterdār* and *nāẓir al-amwāl*, military campaigns, as is evidenced by his participation in military campaigns in Yemen in 991/1583 when he sieged Dhī Marmar, and 992/1584 when he led the siege of Thulā.[136] Matters of war were closely connected to matters of diplomacy; so we find this *defterdār*

[129] I have not been able to find a document stating the full name Muṣṭafā b. Ṭāhir and giving his title as qāḍī of Tirhala. I am basing this supposition on the name of the qāḍī of Tirhala in the 980s – a certain Muṣliḥ al-Dīn – because, judging by the *Sicill-i Osmani,* this was an honorary title that was often combined with the name Muṣṭafā. MD 28, ## 912-914 (dated 984).the honorary title Muṣliḥ al-Dīn appears in Ottoman documents. MD.d.28, ## 912-14.
[130] al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 477, f. 4. According to al-Duʿāmī, Ḥasan Paşa personally chose him as his *defterdār*.
[131] Based on the time when Ḥasan Paşa received his appointment. al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 477, f. 4.
[132] al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 477: f. 78: *al-majlis al-karīm al-sāmī wa-l-muqirr al-fakhīm al-ʿālī daftardār al-mamālik al-sulṭānīya al-amīr nāẓir al-ʿasākir al-sulṭānīya bi-iqlīm al-Yaman*; f. 84: *amīr kabīr shujāʿ basīl wasīm Muṣṭafā bak daftardār al-khizāna al-ʿāmira al-sulṭānīya*; f. 146: *amīr nāẓir ʿaẓīm shujāʿ basīl fakhīm*; ff. 180-181: *al-maqām al-karīm al-muqirr al-ʿālī al-fakhīm afkhar al-umarāʾ qadran wa anfadhuhum nahyan wa amran wa aqwāhum shujāʿatan wa basālatan wa fakhran mawlānā al-amīr*.
[133] al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 477, f. 78.
[134] al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 477, f. 78.
[135] al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 477, f. 78.
[136] al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 477, ff. 84, 127, 187.

negotiating with his opponents (in writing and in person) on all of these occasions.[137] Finally, as a crowning achievement, he was sent back to Istanbul to report on Ḥasan Pasha's successes. He completed the trip in 993/1585, returned to Yemen, and died in 995/1587.[138] Qāḍī Muṣṭafā b. Ṭāhir was a perfect representative of the Ottoman bureaucracy, a professional administrator with background both in the *ilmiye* and *kalemiye* career strands. The impression he made on his Yemeni contemporaries was significant enough to encourage closer attention to Ottoman practice.

Among the "lesser" bureaucrats that came to Yemen with the Ottoman forces was the translator Ḥusayn, who arrived in Yemen in the period of the governor Bahrām Pasha (1570-75).[139] He served at least four governors conducting diplomatic missions and translating for them in numerous meetings with members of the Zaydi elites, ranging from Muṭahhar b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn to the Āl Shams al-Dīn of Kawkabān. He also acted as a link to the *sharīf*s of Mecca that he would visit with the Ottoman ḥajj caravan.[140] Ḥasan Pasha trusted him not only with diplomatic, but also with family matters, as he accompanied one of the wives of the governor from Mecca to Taʿizz. Al-Duʿāmī knew him personally through some of the official meetings and appreciated him as a witty interlocutor.[141] It remains unclear where this person came from; judging by al-Duʿāmī's remark about his knowledge of Turkish he was originally an Arabic speaker, but the absence of the name of the father in references to him could indicate the opposite or his slave or *mawlā* status.

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[137] al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 477, ff. 107, 281, 295-296.
[138] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 227. ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh does not really have warm words for this *defterdār* but he marks his passing as one of the important events in 995/1587, an honor that few Ottomans received in his work.
[139] Al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 447, ff. 19-20.
[140] Al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 447, ff. 165, 249.
[141] Al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 447, f. 220 (al-Duʿāmī participating in a meeting in which Ḥusayn is present); f. 19-20: *rajul jalīl al-qadr lahu nabāha wa dhakāʾ wa ḥusn mufākaha wa muḥāwara.*

One later representative of the Ottoman bureaucratic and scholarly class was Muḥammad b. Muṣṭafā Kānī Çelebi. A native of Medina, but of Turkish descent (or as al-Ziriklī put it aptly – *turkī al-aṣl mustaʿrab*, i.e., an Arabized Turk), he became the *defterdār* of Yemen in 1019/1610.[142] He is famous for writing a historical work, *Bughyat al-khāṭir wa nuzhat al-nāẓir,* commissioned by Maḥmūd Pasha, in which he covers events in Yemen up to 1033/1623.[143] However, his career coincided with a turbulent time of Ottoman retreat from Yemen under the pressure of the Qasimid imams. Even though he had good relationships with Aḥmad Faḍlī Pasha (governor 1031-34/1621-24), the second to last governor of Yemen Ḥaydar Pasha (1034-37/1624-27) did not see eye to eye with the *defterdār*. He arrested him and executed him in 1038/1628.[144]

These portraits of Ottoman bureaucrats, despite the many lacunas, allow us to reconstruct a trajectory of development of the relations between the educated class and the Ottoman Empire in the late 16th – 17th centuries and to consider the changing impression that the Zaydi literati had of Ottoman scholars-bureaucrats. First of all, we see a shift from centrally appointed representatives of the Ottoman state to more local state actors. As we discovered earlier, Kānī Çelebi was a new kind of Ottoman administrator in comparison to his more 'classical' predecessors. Unlike Rumūzī and Muṣṭafā b. Ṭāhir, he came to Yemen from the Hijāz, not from the imperial center. He did not have a career in the Ottoman heartlands (Anatolia or Rumeli) and instead moved from one far-flung province to another. We can also suspect that he was much more comfortable with Arabic as a living language given his Medinan origins. We do not know to what extent Rumūzī and

[142] Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *Aʿlām qāmūs tarājim li-ashhar al-rijāl wa-l-nisāʾ min al-ʿarab wa-l-mustaʿribīn wa-l-mustashriqīn*. 8 vols. Beirut: Dār al-ʿilm li-l-malāyīn, 2002. (vol. 7, pp. 99-100)
[143] Kānī Çelebi, Muḥammad b. Muṣṭafā, *Bughyat al-khāṭir wa nuzhat al-nāẓir,* NF E.391.ar,
[144] al-Sharafī, *al-Lāʾalī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 249b; Ibn al-Muʾayyad, *al-Tuḥfa al-ʿanbarīya,* f. 14a; Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 268. (appointment to *defterdār* position in 1019); *Rawḥ al-rūḥ,* vol. 3, NF D.553.ar, ff. 197b, 200a (his final years in Yemen).

Muṣṭafā b. Ṭāhir were comfortable speaking to their Yemeni counterparts even though they most certainly mastered the literary language, but we can assume that Kānī Çelebi had no issues communicating with the Arabs, being *mustaʿrab* himself. In terms of relations between the Ottoman state and the scholars it employed this was a change in requirements for such bureaucratic appointments, a strong deviation from the 'classical system', and an indication of the changing nature of the empire (see chapter 2).

If we judge by mentions of these scholars in local sources, we discover that Rumūzī gained no attention in Zaydi chronicles, Muṣṭafā b. Ṭāhir had one admirer, al-Duʿāmī, but was not noticed by anyone else, whereas Kānī Çelebi made it into several Zaydi chronicles. There are a number of conclusions to be drawn from this. First, it seems that these mentions correlate with the general level of awareness on the part of the Zaydis of how the Ottoman Empire worked. In the days of Rumūzī there were no Zaydi scholars who could fully understand what kind of an official he was. In the days of al-Duʿāmī, there was a slow growth of understanding of what those officials and scholars represented, what professional skills they had and why their careers were remarkable. This understanding, however, was limited to those Zaydis who directly engaged with the Ottomans, and usually only those who did that in comparable capacities. By the time of the disintegration of Ottoman rule in Yemen and the tragic death of Kānī Çelebi, the attention of the Zaydi literati was focused on the Ottoman officials, as more of them comprehended the importance of these people to the Ottoman system. This comprehension was linked to the fact that more Zaydi scholars themselves were discovering the benefits of an administrative career. In addition, Kānī Çelebī appeared to them as someone easier to relate to. Probably the best sign of a positive attitude to this official is the fact that the location of his grave in Ṣanʿāʾ was recorded in Zaydi sources.[145]

[145] *Rawḥ al-rūḥ,* vol. 3, NF D.553.ar, f. 201a.

First steps: imitation

Did the Zaydi scholars and their patrons / employers imitate Ottoman practice? Did they start to realize their own value within a political and administrative system with more vividness once they saw the Ottoman example? We can measure the effect of this encounter indirectly. The rising number of Zaydi literati taking up positions as *wazīrs* of the different Zaydi families who vie for political dominance and interact with the Ottoman as tributary rulers is the strongest indicator of this imitation stage. While *wazīrs* were not part of the Ottoman provincial administration, the general idea of having a bureaucrat helping out the ruling family was Ottoman-inspired. It signaled a recognition of the complexity of the process of governing, an unprecedented (for Zaydi Yemen) increase in administrative operations, and the need for qualified specialists to handle these processes. From the period of the re-conquest led by Koca Sinan Pasha onwards, the numbers of *wazīrs* proliferated. Here is a short list of such Zaydi bureaucrats:

1. *wazīr* amīr ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Dāʿī, an Ottoman official;[146]
2. sharīf Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. Ṣalāḥ al-Ḥamzī, *wazīr* of the Āl Shams al-Dīn of Kawkabān;[147]
3. sayyid Ḥusayn b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥamzī (d. 1644), *wazīr* of the Āl al-Muṭahhar, another branch of descendants of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn;[148]

[146] Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 187. Al-Dāʿī is a name that most often appears in sources from this period in the context of the Hamdān tribe leaders, who were Ismāʿilī.
[147] Al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 447, ff. 17, 134, 177; al-Muʾayyadī, *Rawḍat al-albāb*, NF B.18.ar, f. 34a.
[148] *Rawḥ al-Rūḥ*, vol. 3, NF D.553.ar, f. 221ab.

4. sayyid ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Ṣalāḥ Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil, *wazīr* of the Āl al-Muṭahhar;[149]
5. sayyid Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥūthī, *wazīr* of the Āl al-Muʾayyad of Ṣaʿda, then court poet of the Ottoman governors in Ṣanʿāʾ;[150]
6. sayyid Dāwud b. al-Mahdī al-Muʾayyadī, *wazīr* of imam al-Hādī Aḥmad b. ʿIzz al-Dīn in Ṣaʿda;[151]
7. ʿAbdallāh b. ʿUmar al-Riyāmī, *wazīr* of Muṣṭafā Nashshār Pasha in Taʿizz.[152]

The people in this list are not mentioned in any biographical dictionaries dedicated to scholars (aside from the member of the Banū al-Wazīr who is mentioned in the family history *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr*). Five out of seven are sayyids. This is in line with the *ahl al-riyāsa* inclinations of the sayyids discussed in chapter 4. The new thing here is that the *ahl al-riyāsa,* instead of seeking positions of independence, associate themselves with a ruler, and in one case with a foreign ruler, the Ottomans. The non-sayyid *wazīrs* on this list are all associated with the Ottoman administration. We know little about them, but both are outsiders to Zaydi Yemen; as far as we can judge, al-Riyāmī was of Ḥaḍramī descent and al-Dāʿī was possibly an Ismāʿilī from the Hamdān tribe.[153] Not all of the people on this list were faqīhs in the eyes of their contemporaries, but undoubtedly

[149] *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar f. 82b; al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 447, ff. 25, 43, 48, 50-51, 82, 217; Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 202. He is a member of the Banū al-Wazīr.
[150] Muṭahhar al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra ilā jumal min ʿuyūn al-sīra*, British Library, Or. 3329, f. 5a; al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 124a; al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 447, f. 189; Ibn Luṭfallāh, 305.
[151] *Mulḥaq al-bassāma al-ṣughrā,* NF C.112.ar, f. 76b; both are of the Āl al-Muʾayyad family of sayyids.
[152] Aḥmad b. Yūsuf Fayrūz, *Maṭāliʿ al-nīrān fī taʾrīkh al-Yaman,* BNF Ar. 1651, f. 12a/14a.
[153] The Banū al-Riyāmī of Riyām near Radāʿ are Ḥaḍramīs. See al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 1, pp. 717–18.

most of them had received a Zaydi religious education and had a high level of literacy which manifested itself in their skills in producing official documents and composing elegant letters.

The career of Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥūthī who was a man of letters, known for his commemorative poetry, is quite indicative of the new trajectories that official positions opened to ambitious Zaydi literati in the Ottoman period. He began his career as a typical Ṣaʿda scholar and went to study with the Mirghim scholars in wādī al-Sirr.[154] This opened a career path for him in the administration of the Āl al-Muʾayyad imams, for whom he composed official letters.[155] But when in 991/1583 his employer Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn b. al-imām ʿIzz al-Dīn's head was cut off by the Ottomans, the sayyid shifted careers.[156] He moved to Ṣanʿāʾ, became fluent in the Turkish language, composed poems in honor of the sultans and the governors, and was even commissioned to write a history of the Ottomans in Yemen.[157] He also negotiated with imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim on behalf of the Ottomans, which is another indication of the high level of trust that they had in him.[158]

In terms of functions, these *wazīr*s all combined diplomatic and administrative functions. They were expected to represent their employers in front of the Ottoman governors or in any negotiations. Related to this, they were often needed during the surrender of forts as mediators, and in the case of the *wazīr*s of the Shams al-Dīns, they could also be called upon by Ottoman officials. Their administrative functions that we can reconstruct usually had to do with the composition of

[154] al-Muqrāʾī, *Maknūn al-sirr*, 80.
[155] Al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 477 f. 189.
[156] Al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 477 f. 152.
[157] He wrote poems about the Ottoman governor Muḥammad Rāghib Pasha in 1026/1617 (Ibn Luṭfallāh, *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*, 296.) and a eulogy for the deceased sultan Murad in 1003/1594 (Ibn Luṭfallāh, 231.); on the commissioning of a history of the Ottomans see al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha*, British Library, Or. 3329. f. 5b.
[158] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha*, Br.L. Or. 3329, f. 5a.

official letters for their employer. This, of course, can be seen as an extension of their diplomatic functions. The *wazīr*s, who were diplomats, were tasked with the composition of letters that were directed not to the subjects of their employers, but to those with whom they corresponded as equals.

In conclusion, there are no 'pure' scholars among these *wazīr*s, because Zaydi ʿulamāʾ had other opportunities to engage with the Ottoman government (on which below). In addition, the position of *wazīr* was relatively new, seemingly required a lot of networking and character traits that were more characteristic of sayyids with an *ahl al-riyāsa* bent than of ʿulamāʾ. However, even among this early group of Ottoman-period officials we see people who were clearly part of the Zaydi ʿulamāʾ circles and shared an educational background with them. These were the individuals who were willing to take a risk in the new conditions. The 'pure' scholars were to follow.

Aside from *wazīr*s we discover in this period other Zaydi literati who are officially employed by Ottoman tributary rulers in Yemen and stylize themselves in an Ottoman manner. ʿĀmir b. Muḥammad al-Duʿāmī is certainly the most prominent example of such a scholar. His pro-Ottoman sentiments are visible in his book that ended up being part of a library of the Ottoman governor Ḥasan Pasha.[159] He was a high ranking official at the Kawkabānī Sharaf al-Dīn court. Judging by the tasks that he lists in his history, he had scribal and diplomatic responsibilities, and often represented his employer, Muḥammad b. Shams al-Dīn, at the Ottoman governor's court in Ṣanʿāʾ.[160] He composed official letters and praise poetry addressed to the Ottoman governor, which indicates his skill with words as well as calligraphic abilities.[161] The fact that he composed a history of Yemen for the Ottoman governor that was copied in an ornate style and taken out of Yemen to

[159] Al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 477; according to the colophon (f. 338), the manuscript was produced in Kawkabān.
[160] Al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 477, ff. 25, 62, 133.
[161] Al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 477, ff. 137-141, 329-330.

Istanbul is another indicator of his awareness of Ottoman traditions of courtly history writing. ʿĀmir b. Muḥammad al-Duʿāmī can be deemed a representative of the Zaydi *kalemiye* class, and an example of a successful imitation of Ottoman practices in Zaydi Yemen.

Yemeni scholars in Ottoman employment

The Ottomans' interactions with scholars in Yemen were defined by the roles that they envisioned for them. We can distinguish two groups – the judges (*qāḍīs*) and the scholars who were employed in fiscal-military tasks. From early on the Ottomans relied on the Shafiʿī scholars of Lower Yemen in their administrative practices. However, these scholars had little authority in Upper Yemen. *Qāḍī* al-Mawzaʿī, the author of an insightful chronicle from the period, for example, never went further up north than Taʿizz.[162] *Qāḍīs* ʿAbd al-Ṣamad b. ʿAbd al-ʿAlīm al-Maḥraqī and ʿAbd al-ʿAlīm b. Muḥammad al-Aḥmar, who both worked in the *diwān* of Behrām Pasha as chancery scribes (*kātib al-inshāʾ*), were also from Lower Yemen, but with somewhat stronger connections in the mountains of Kuḥlān al-Sharaf and among the tribes due to their tribal origins.[163] These early "hires" had no Zaydi allegiances. This is not, however, an indication of Ottoman distrust of the Zaydis. Zaydism had always been a very peculiar branch of Shiʿism; it is even unclear from the sixteenth century sources whether the Ottoman perceived the Zaydis to be Shiʿis in the

[162] Frédérique Soudan, *Le Yémen ottoman d'après la chronique d'al-Mawzaʿī al-Iḥsān fī dukhūl mamlakat al-Yaman taḥt ẓill ʿadālat Āl ʿUṯmān*, Textes arabes et études islamiques 37 (Cairo: IFAO, 1999).

[163] *Bulūgh al-Marām,* BNF Ar. 1651, f. 52b. al-Maḥraqī's nisba might refer al-Miḥraq in Ḥajja province (al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 2, p. 1424.). A later relative of his, ʿAbdallāh al-Maḥraqī, served as a *kātib* in the Ottoman chancery and was known for his beautiful calligraphy. *Rawḥ al-rūḥ,* vol. 3, NF D.553.ar, f. 201a. As for al-Aḥmar it is unclear whether he is related to the Āl al-Aḥmar, the shaykhs of Ḥāshid, who rose to prominence in the Qasimid period. (al-Maqḥafī, vol. 1, p. 38.).

same way as the Shiʿis of Lebanon, for example.[164] And even if they did, as previous research shows, the Ottomans relied on the Shiʿa in the administration of local provincial matters.[165] As time passed and the new systematization of practices that the Ottomans employed took hold, Zaydi scholars stopped shunning cooperation with the conquerors and became integrated into the Ottoman system.

By the end of 'the Ottoman century', Zaydi scholars increasingly accepted official appointments in the Ottoman administration. Muḥammad b. ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Muʾayyadī (d. 1051/1641) is known as al-Muftī in Yemeni sources since he held the position of mufti in Ṣanʿāʾ.[166] He participated in the efforts of the Ottoman administration to systematize *waqf* properties in the city and acted as witness of the resulting document (*defter*), now known as *Musawaddat Sinān*.[167] The fact that his position implied working closely with the Ottoman administration was not considered a stigma any more as is evidenced by the fact that among his students we find representatives of the

[164] Ottoman documents occasionally refer to certain regions in Yemen as being known as *qızılbāsh.* However, it seems that the regions in question where more known for their reticent tribal resistance rather than particularly strong loyalty to the Zaydi madhhab. See, for example, TSMA.d.314, f. 18a: *wilāyat ʿAmrān al-maʿrūf bi-qızılbāsh; wilāyat Baʿdān al-maʿrūf bi-qızılbāsh.* By contrast, the Ṣaʿda region, surely a Zaydi stronghold in the year this *defter* was composed (968-971/1560-62) does not receive such a characterization.
[165] Stefan Winter, *The Shiites of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule, 1516–1788*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[166] Muḥammad Masʿūd Arkīn, "Shuʿarāʾ al-Yaman fī-l-ʿaṣr al-ʿuthmānī," in *Proceedings of the International Congress on Yemen during the Ottoman Era. Sana'a, 16-17 December 2009*, Sources and Studies on the History of Islamic Civilization Series (Istanbul: IRCICA, 2011), 249.
[167] Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn Ibn al-Qāsim, *Ghāyat al-amānī fī akhbār al-quṭr al-yamānī*, ed. Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ ʿĀshūr and Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ziyādah (al-Qāhira: Dār al-kātib al-ʿarabī li-l-ṭibāʿa wa-l-nashr, 1968), vol. 2, p. 792; R. B. Serjeant and Ḥusayn b. ʿAbdallāh al-ʿAmrī, "Administrative Organisation," in *Ṣanʿāʾ: An Arabian Islamic City* (London: Melisende, 2013), 153. The document actually included two volumes, one of which was compiled in 1016/1607 under Sinān and the second in 1026/1617 under Jaʿfer Pasha and is still preserved in the Ministry of Waqfs (Wizārat al-Awqāf) in Ṣanʿāʾ. ʿAlī Saʿd Ṭawāf, "Ḥifẓ al-wathāʾiq khilāl fatrat al-ḥukm al-ʿuthmānī li-l-Yaman," in *Proceedings of the International Congress on Yemen during the Ottoman Era. Sana'a, 16-17 December 2009*, ed. Halit Eren, Sources and Studies on the History of Islamic Civilization Series (Istanbul: IRCICA, 2011), 220.

Banū al-Wazīr.[168] Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Ḥasan al-Shāmī (d. 1071/1660) is another sayyid and Zaydi scholar who accepted an official appointment. He was appointed by the Ottomans as the imam of a mosque in Ṣanʿāʾ, namely the Masjid al-Shahīdayn. The sayyid also performed functions of a judge as he was expected to oversee marriage contracts (*yushārif ʿalā ʿuqūd al-ankiḥa*).[169]

We also increasingly find Zaydi scholars taking up fiscal-military responsibilities in the new Ottoman-Yemeni order. One example is faqīh Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-ʿUlufī al-Qurashī, a scion of the al-ʿUlufī family. He was an Ottoman governor (*wālī*) in Ḥaydān in 1014/1605.[170] Such a position implied that he had oversight of both the army stationed in the region and the treasury. Faqīh ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Shahārī was another Zaydi scholar employed by the Ottoman administration of Yemen at the end of the 'Ottoman century.' He made it into sources because he played a double game, shifting his allegiances between the rising imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim and the Ottoman governor.[171] This was a result of his control over the army and finances of the region placed under his control. In a time of crisis, he used these administrative resources for his own benefit.

While our search for evidence of Ottoman employment of Zaydi scholars is hampered by many obstacles – narrative sources often disregard these appointments and biographical dictionaries, if they even mention these people, tend to 'forget' about their engagement with the Ottoman administration. As for the Ottoman documentary sources, there are two issues with them. First, they are patchy, as was shown in chapter 2. And secondly, they often do not provide enough data

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[168] *Tārīkh Banī al-Wazīr,* NF C.35.ar, f. 95b
[169] ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī al-Wazīr, *Tārīkh al-Yaman khilāl al-qarn al-ḥādī ʿashar al-hijrī - al-sābiʿ ʿashar al-mīlādī 1045-1090 (1635-168) al-musammā Tārīkh ṭabaq al-ḥalwā wa ṣaḥāf al-mann wa-l-salwā*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Raḥīm Jāzim (Beirut: Dār al-Masīra, 1985), 174.
[170] al-Sharafī, NF C.101.ar f. 178b-179a
[171] al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, ff. 128a, 130a, 145a, 154a, 160a, 166b, 167a, 174a, 186a, 187a, 188b.

points about an individual for us to reconstruct his background. Nevertheless, the evidence that I was able to discover so far indicates a steady warming up of scholarly attitudes towards state employment in the Ottoman period. This thawing is even more visible among Zaydi literati who welcomed Ottoman patronage.

Zaydi literati outside the administrative hierarchy

The Ottoman period in Yemen seems to introduce local scholars to another development that had by then become the norm elsewhere in the Arab lands: the merger of the "*adab*-oriented" and the "*sunna*-oriented" cultures and a resulting "*adab*ization of the ulama."[172] Artistic patronage in Zaydi Yemen underwent a boom during the Ottoman century. The Ottoman governors had a wider economic base that they could use towards patronage of poets and writers. In this period, court historians became increasingly important.

Patronage was not unknown in the previous periods. Under imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn we find early examples of religious scholars turned poets and historians working at his court – among them faqīh Müsā b. Yaḥyā Ibn Bahrān (d. 933/1526)[173], a relative of the Ṣaʿda Bahrān family, Muḥammad b. al-Murtaḍā Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil (d. 933/1526), who also served as official poet at the Tahirid court,[174] and the official biographers of the imam – al-ʿUlufī and al-Zurayqī. However, it is hard to prove that any of these scholars (except perhaps for Mūsā Ibn Bahrān) were making a living by writing in honor of the imam.

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[172] Thomas Bauer, "Mamluk Literature: Misunderstandings and New Approaches," *Mamluk Studies Review* 9, no. 2 (2005): 108.
[173] One of the most prolific poets of the Sharaf al-Dīn period; a *dīwān* of his poetry survives in a unique manuscript. IZbACF, ZA 020-01 https://elibrary.mara.gov.om/fr/fonds-imam-bin-ali/library-fonds-fondation-culturelle-imam-bin-ali/livre/?id=9227#book/188
[174] *Tārīkh banī al-Wazīr,* NF D.556.ar, f. 44b; C.35.ar, f. 85a.

This situation changes profoundly in the Ottoman period, when, in imitation of Istanbul mores, Ottoman governors pay poets and historians (as well as nameless craftsmen) to create works of art in their honor. We find among the people involved in such activities ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh and his sons, who were the court historians and astronomers of several consecutive Ottoman governors. They were trusted by the Ottoman administration and were granted free access to meetings of the *dīwān.* This is evidenced by the remarks of ʿĪsā b. Luṭfallāh on his own father who was exiled to Istanbul (he could not have got this information unless he was tapping into Ottoman correspondence) and by his insider information on deliberations in Ottoman circles that appear in the continuation of *Rawḥ al-rūḥ*. Then there is Ṣalāḥ b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥāḍirī who was one of the only two sayyids mentioned by Ḥaydar Pasha as worthy of staying in Yemen – he was a professional poet and *adīb* known for his witty answers.[175] He was also a scholar who always appeared in the company of Muḥammad b. ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Muʾayyadī al-Muftī mentioned above.[176] This sayyid, whose entanglement with the Ottomans is left out of his biography in Ibn Abī al-Rijāl's biographical dictionary, clearly belonged to a new stratum of Zaydi literati formed in the conditions of Ottoman court patronage. In the same category of new Yemeni literati we could mention Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥūthī, a scholar who openly sided with the Ottomans, learned the Ottoman Turkish language, was invited to write a history of the Ottoman conquest of Yemen, and composed poems in honor of important Ottoman figures, including the sultan.[177] Another example is Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn who started out as the *munshī* of official letters from

[175] *Rawḥ al-Rūḥ,* vol.3, NF D.553.ar, f. 202a; Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 2, pp. 486–88.
[176] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, vol. 2, pp. 487–88.
[177] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Nubdha al-mushīra,* Br.L. Or. 3329, f. 5a.

the Shams al-Dīns to the Ottoman governors and eventually fulfilled a commission from the Ottoman governor to write in support of Sufism.[178]

While we do not yet have detailed information on payments from the Ottoman governors to these scholars and literati, since they were not considered military personnel and thus do not appear in the *defter*s, we can still assume that it was a lucrative position. First of all, the governors of Yemen, like their Ottoman peers in other Arab lands, for example, Egypt, were well-educated men.[179] While not speakers of Arabic and in need of translators, they were still capable of appraising the beauty of a well-written letter or poem. Ḥasan Pasha, for instance, paid local poets for their work.[180] In a development that al-Duʿāmī found notable, he would equally reward the literate poets and the tribal poets (*shuʿarāʾ al-aʿwāmm*) from Khawlān and Radāʿ who wrote *madḥs* in his honor. In exceptional cases, he would request a poem to be read several times to him and translated; he would keep a manuscript copy of it as a keepsake.[181] All this indicates that there was indeed a demand for the special skills that the Zaydi literati had during the Ottoman period.

One mode of interaction between the Ottomans and the Yemenis that is absent from the sources is *majālis.*[182] I would argue that the silence of the sources on the issue of intellectual

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[178] Al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 447, ff. 27-32, 73-76, 162-164, 189, 247; the collection (*dīwān*) of his poetry is preserved in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana (NF F.312.ar). The edition of his poem in support of Sufism and the response of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim is currently being prepared for publication by Bernard Haykel and Wilferd Madelung.

[179] Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule. Institutions, Waqf and Architecture in Cairo (16th and 17th Centuries)* (Leiden / New York / Köln: E.J. Brill, 1994), 54. Al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 477 ff. 71-73.

[180] Al-Duʿāmī, *al-Rawḍ al-ḥasan,* Leiden Or. 477 f. 56: *aʿṭā li-shuʿarāʾihim (yaʿnī li-shuʿarāʾ al-ʿarab) … wa yuthīb ʿalā-l-shiʿr.*

[181] Al-Duʿāmī, Leiden Or. 477 ff. 71-73

[182] There seems to be nothing on a par with the Damascene encounters between Ottoman and the Arab intellectuals and certainly nothing similar to the wealth of sources describing these meetings and their participants. Helen Pfeifer, "Encounter after the Conquest: Scholarly Gatherings in 16th-Century Ottoman Damascus," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47, no. 02 (May 2015): 219–39.

interactions in the salon does not mean that there were no such occasions. There is indirect evidence that the meetings of the *dīwān* of the governor often took on the shape of a salon with poetry being recited in appropriate moments. The lavish public ceremonies and feasts that were organized by the Ottoman governors were another occasion for mingling. We should also consider that there is no information that any *qāḍī* was appointed to Yemen from the imperial center, and it seems that without such a figure there were fewer incentives for the local scholars to meet their Ottoman peers.

Formation of a professional administrative class?

The Ottoman period normalized a direct relationship between the state and the scholars, even those of a heterodox religious affiliation. This 'Ottoman pragmatism' had important repercussions for Zaydi Yemeni scholars in the future. Scholars lost their independence in exchange for a more secure, increasingly more prestigious and lucrative career track as a state official and shifted the locus of their prestige from pure knowledge to rank in the administration. At the same time, the status of scholars in the political elites of Yemen was formalized in unprecedented ways. This consolidated their ranks and possibly led to the formation of a more distinct group known in modern Yemen as the *quḍāt.* The Ottoman period started the formation of a professional administrative class and its mentality. During the post-Ottoman, Qasimid period, the shift towards a professional class of administrators continued, as the Zaydi imams overtook the coffee trade that allowed them to pay for an expanding bureaucratic system. In this period, we can finally speak of an identity consciousness of the Zayid ʿulamāʾ as members of the political elite.

The Zaydi professional administrative class in the Qasimid period

In the Qasimid period Zaydi scholars continued on the trajectory established by the Ottoman presence. They developed a professional group consciousness as demonstrated by the appearance of professional biographical dictionaries. They accepted positions in the administrative ranks of the Qasimid imamate and for the first administrative families took shape. The state became closer connected to the scholarly class as following Ottoman example, Qasimid rulers extended their interference into matters of family *waqf*, which was a key component of the independence of the scholars.[183] There was however no development of a *kalemiye* class, i.e. a class of literate people who are mainly trained in the science of administration. This most probably has to do with the scale of the Qasimid administration that never faced the challenges of an early modern empire – no vast territorial expansion, no need to regularly assess the amount of incoming taxes over an enormous territory with a wide variety of imposed taxes, and the need to support a large standing army.

A new professional mentality

The most vivid aspect of the development of a new professional class and the shifts in the consciousness of the Zaydi ʿulamāʾ in the post-Ottoman period is the appearance of multiple biographical dictionaries. Ibn Abī Rijāl's biographical dictionary is the first in which a Zaydi author put together a list of scholars from the region, regardless of their background, and provided information about administrative as well as more traditional, scholarly, careers pursued by them. Qādī Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ Ibn Abī Rijāl (d. 1092/1681) was a scholar of non-sayyid background who served

[183] Hovden, *Waqf in Zaydi Yemen*, 2019, 95–110, 204–21.

several Qasimid imams.[184] Being a judge, he was closely involved with the imam al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl and his family whom he also served as a scribe and a *khaṭīb*.[185] In this capacity in 1060/1650 he penned an official response to Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Muʾayyadī on behalf of the imam.[186] Ibn Abī al-Rijāl was considered a great master of calligraphy, and was paid for his work by wealthy patrons.[187] He also accumulated an impressive library most of which was then dispersed and can now be reconstructed through ownership statements.[188] The importance of his stance in Zaydi society and especially among the Ṣanʿāʾ elites is clear in two episodes of transmission of power. In 1054/1644 when imam al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl was rising to power, this *qāḍī* was among the first people to pledge allegiance to him. By doing that, he paved a legal path for the imam, as he was a recognized scholar accepting the imam's leadership unquestioningly.[189] In 1087/1676 after the death of imam al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl, Ibn Abī al-Rijāl joined a small group of influential people who took stances on the transition of power. Once again, his opinion that it was permissible for the imam to be a *muqallid,* rather than a *mujtahid,* was accepted by these political leaders as a rationale to pledge allegiance to imam al-Mahdī Aḥmad b. Ḥasan.[190] The influence of the *qāḍī* went so far that he made official his opinions on what he saw as unfortunate

[184] The family surname, Ibn Abī al-Rijāl (the son of the father of men) refers to an ancestor who, allegedly, had over forty sons each of whom had in his turn five sons. Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 1, p. 44 (n3).
[185] An example demonstrating the close link to imam al-Mutawakkil is a colophon statement of Ibn Abī al-Rijāl dated 1083, in the house (*bi-dār*) of the imam. An example of his work as a scribe for the family is an ownership statement of Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn b. amīr al-muʾminīn written by Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ Ibn Abī al-Rijāl in 1068/1657 (NF D.282.ar, f. 1a).
[186] al-Wazīr, *Ṭabaq al-ḥalwā*, 122.
[187] He copied NF F.167.ar for Dāwūd b. Ḥasan al-Dhamārī. NF F.167.ar, f. 15b.
[188] In addition to NF A.68.ar copied in his hand, he also owned NF C.16.ar, NF E.90.ar, NF E.101.ar, NF E.216.ar, NF E.302.ar, NF E.361.ar, NF E.365.ar, NF E.377.ar.
[189] Ibn al-Qāsim, *Bahjat al-zamān*, vol. 1, p. 144.
[190] al-Wazīr, *Ṭabaq al-ḥalwā*, 326–27; Ibn al-Qāsim, *Bahjat al-zamān*, vols. 3, 936–38.

marital alliances of the Qasimid familys.[191] Eventually, his relationship with imam Aḥmad b. Ḥasan soured, he retracted his support from the imam, and retired to a village, far from political activity.[192]

Ibn Abī al-Rijāl made the perfect author of a biographical dictionary that brought together Zaydi scholars and statesmen over several generations. This achievement was unique and was praised by later authors, such as Muḥammad al-Shawkānī.[193] Ibn Abī al-Rijāl's dictionary is innovative for Zaydi Yemen, as it brought together information on scholars (including teachers, students, works studied and composed), and added to their portraits information about their political activities and their qualities as litterateurs (*adīb*s). To this end, Ibn Abī al-Rijāl cited relevant poetical works. His approach to biographies of Zaydi scholars reveals his interest in the various pursuits of scholars. The image of Zaydi scholars that he creates would have been familiar to his Ottoman contemporaries and mixed the recognizable *ilmiye* and *kalemiye* career strands. These two themes are traceable in later authors' perceptions of Ibn Abī al-Rijāl: to al-Shawkānī he is a scholar, but to Aḥmad al-Kawkabānī he was primarily an *adīb,* a man of letters, the author of eloquent letters.[194] In short, Ibn Abī al-Rijāl was a representative qāḍī of the post-Ottoman Zaydi imamate – a highly educated scholar who combined intellectual pursuits with administrative functions.

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[191] Ibn al-Qāsim, *Bahjat al-zamān*, vol. 3, p. 965. The author of the chronicle, a member of the Qasimid family, disagreed with Ibn Abī al-Rijāl's opinion: *wa-qad ghalaṭa Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ Ibn Abī-l-Rijāl fī risālatihi ḥaythu qāla inna al-Muʾayyad wa-l-Mutawakkil zawwajā man lā yuḥall tazwījuhu bi-ijmāʿ al-ʿitra.*

[192] Ibn al-Qāsim, vol. 3, pp. 967–68.

[193] Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Shawkānī, *Al-Badr al-ṭāliʿ bi-maḥāsin man baʿd al-qarn al-sābiʿ* (Cairo: Dār al-kitāb al-islāmī, n.d.), vol. 1, pp. 59–60.

[194] Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Kawkabānī, *Ṭīb al-samar fī awqāt al-saḥar*, ed. ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad al-Ḥabshī (Abu Dhabi: al-Majmaʿ al-thaqāfī, 2002), vol. 1, pp. 443–446.

Ibn Abī al-Rijāl saw his own work in a slightly different light. He remarked that usually the Zaydis overlooked biographies of scholars due to their overwhelming focus on the Ahl al-Bayt as the leaders of the community: "they thought that mentioning the leader rather than the followers suffices."[195] This, he wrote, resulted in a rupture (*ikhlāl*) of memory, and a disregard for the achievements of the indispensable followers. The opening statement of Ibn Abī al-Rijāl's dictionary points to the rise of a professional class and the formation of its distinct identity, a sign of a changing state in which it was no longer possible to identify its history with the deeds of the imams and sayyids alone. Ibn Abī al-Rijāl was in essence a revisionist – his biographical dictionary was more than a collection of biographies or a tool for classifying people; it was a "scholars' history of Zaydi Yemen."

Ibn Abī al-Rijāl's biographical dictionary was one of several post-Qasimid projects that shaped new identities for the educated class. A group of these new biographical works focused on the literary talents of the Zaydi educated class. Pioneering among them was the work of Aḥmad b. Ḥasan b. Ḥamīd al-Dīn b. Muṭahhar b. al-imām Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn (d. 1072/1661) entitled *Tarwīḥ al-mushūq wa talwīḥ al-burūq.* This Kawkabānī *adīb* was one of the leading poets and authors of *maqāmāt* of his time; his contemporary Ibn Abī al-Rijāl thought highly of him.[196] Its production is possibly linked to the work of the Egyptian scholar Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Khafājī *Rayḥānat al-alibbāʾ wa zahrat al-ḥayā al-dunyā* that reached Yemen in 1066/1655.[197] But popularity alone could not have incited the author to compose a Yemeni analogue – his work necessarily

[195] *Kān li-ahl al-bayt min dhālika [*i.e. *tarājim] akthar mimmā li-l-fuqahāʾ ... al-zaydīya iqtaṣarū ʿalā hādhā-l-nawʿ fī dhikr ʿulamāʾihim wa raʾaw anna al-ʿināya bi-l-matbūʿ tughnī ʿan al-tābiʿ faʾinna ruʾasāʾ al-umma hum duʿāt āl Muḥammad ... fa iqtaṣarū ʿalā dhālika.* Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 1, p. 96.
[196] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, vol. 1, pp. 264–89.
[197] al-Kawkabānī, *Ṭīb al-samar fī awqāt al-saḥar*, 6.

reflected new developments in the social hierarchies of Zaydi literati. The tradition of biographical collections of Yemeni *udabāʾ* was furthered in the eighteenth century by Qāsim b. Ḥasan b. Muṭahhar al-Jurmūzī (d. 1146/1733) and his contemporary Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥaymī al-Kawkabānī (d. 1151/1738). Al-Jurmūzī's dictionary even divides litterateurs by social standing, dedicating one section to rulers (*al-ḥukkām wa-l-wulāt*), one to *qāḍīs* and scribes (*kuttāb*), and one to poets.[198] This approach is indicative of the formation of a special corporate feeling among the Zaydi administrative class. Al-Ḥaymī follows a simpler, geographical division, separating the authors of Kawkabān and Ṣanʿāʾ. These works manifest the continuous process of *adabization* of the educated class in Yemen – a development that is parallel to transformations among literati in Egypt and Syria under Ottoman rule as well as in the Ottoman heartlands and is closely linked to the virtues of an educated state administrator.[199]

Other works focused on the biographies of scholars, and representative among these is the biographical dictionary of Ibrāhīm b. Qāsim b. al-imām al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim (d. 1153/1740), *Ṭabaqāt al-zaydīya al-kubrā*. The *ṭabaqāt* genre of biographical dictionaries was well known in the Islamic world. Why did Yemeni Zaydis take so long to adopt this genre? This could be linked to the same processes that encouraged the production of *adab*-focused biographical dictionaries; as the distinctions between administrative and scholarly careers became more pronounced, the need to group together the ʿulamāʾ who were only focused on scholarly careers became more pronounced.

[198] No manuscript of this work is known; description is based on the information in al-Kawkabānī, 9.
[199] Bauer, "Mamluk Literature: Misunderstandings and New Approaches," 108; Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Âli (1541-1600)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 214–31.

One way to test this hypothesis is to compare how both dictionaries treat the biographies of educated Zaydis who did not pursue a scholarly career. An example of such literati is Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ al-Ḥaymī, the first Zaydi diplomat of the Qasimid period. His friend Aḥmad Ibn Abī al-Rijāl was the first person to write a biography of this person.[200] Half of it is focused on his literary production, citing poetry composed by him.[201] Even though Ibn Abī al-Rijāl tries to also present him as a scholar, calling him a *muḥaqqiq fī-l-fiqh,* from the first lines of the biography the new career path that al-Ḥaymī was pursuing becomes clear. While knowledgeable in traditional Islamic sciences, his real expertise was, apparently, in the pre-Islamic history of the Arabs (*ayyām al-ʿarab*) and proverbs (*al-amthāl*). His service to several imams in diplomatic functions was the highlight of his career, and Ibn Abī al-Rijāl writes in detail about his different missions, especially his visit to Ethiopia.[202] The *adab*-focused biography in *Ṭīb al-samar fī awqāt al-saḥar* composed by al-Ḥaymī's descendant picks up the themes of his literary activities already present in Ibn Abī al-Rijāl and makes it a centerpiece, even while naming him a chief qāḍī (*qāḍī al-quḍāt*).[203] But the author of *Ṭabaqāt al-zaydīya al-kubrā* approaches the same biographical material from a different angle. There is only a brief mention of the *qāḍī*'s literary achievements, travels, and friendships. The main focus in this short biography is on his studies with imam al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl and on his teaching.[204] This is the only biography of this scholar that informs its readers of the works he studied and the students he instructed and simultaneously downplays his administrative and literary careers.

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[200] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 2, pp. 13–28.
[201] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, vol. 2, pp. 19–28.
[202] Emeri Johannes van Donzel, *A Yemenite Embassy to Ethiopia, 1647-1649: Al-Ḥaymī's Sīrat al-Ḥabasha Newly Introduced, Translated and Annotated*, Äthiopistische Forschungen 21 (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1986).
[203] al-Kawkabānī, *Ṭīb al-samar fī awqāt al-saḥar*, 90–95.
[204] al-Shahārī, *TZK*, vol. 1, pp. 291–92.

There are two conclusions to be drawn from this. First, we can assume that this *qāḍī* indeed had scholarly qualifications; but for his contemporaries they were not relevant as he pursued a career track for which literary skills were of greater importance. Secondly, knowing that scholarly activities were a less defining aspect of the *qāḍī*'s life, we can argue that the focus of *Ṭabaqāt al-zaydīya al-kubrā* on it evidences the divisions that appeared over time between scholarly and bureaucratic careers in Yemen. This division could be an important aspect to consider when comparing the Qasimid imamate with other polities of the early modern Islamic world. In some states, like the Ottoman Empire, the division between specialists in religion and specialists in administration deepened, while in others, as in Safavid Iran, the position of religious specialists within government structures became more powerful.[205] On this spectrum, Qasimid Yemen seems to be imitating Ottoman practice, an indication of the resilience of imperial strategies. At the same time *qāḍīs* in Zaydi Yemen had a strong hand in political decisions, in a way that is more similar to Safavid realities.

The rise of *qāḍīs* in the early Qasimid period

The scholarly class in the Qasimid period, especially scholars with the rank of *qāḍī,* became the linchpin of the political system. Their functions in the administrative system ranged from legal oversight to matters of taxation. The rise of the scholarly class in the early Qasimid period is linked to their abilities to rally tribes through their connection to them by virtue of descent or residence in *hijra*s. The earliest example of this role of the *qāḍī*s in the Qasimid state comes from the al-

[205] Metin Kunt, "Ottomans and Safavids: States, Statecraft, and Societies, 1500–1800," in *A Companion to the History of the Middle East*, ed. Youssef M. Choueiri (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2007), 203–4; Theocharis N. Grigoriadis, "Compromising Islam with Empire: Bureaucracy and Class in Safavid Iran," *Iran & the Caucasus* 17, no. 4 (2013): 371–82.

Ḥamāṭī family. This family claimed leadership among the tribes of al-Ḥayma, and both Yūsuf b. ʿAlī al-Ḥamāṭī and his son ʿAlī b. Yūsuf combined their leadership position among the tribes with scholarship, thus forging an authoritative stance that served the Qasimid imams well.[206] Yūsuf b. ʿAlī al-Ḥamāṭī (d. 1007/1598) received a scholarly education and travelled widely (from Zabīd to Mecca to the *hijra*s of Yemen) for it. He became one of the early supporters of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim and directed his efforts at the tribes of his home region.[207] His authority in the region allowed him to appoint his own representatives as early as 1006/1597 when he appointed a sayyid, Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Qarāʿ, as an *amīr* and faqīh Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-ʿIyyānī as his *wazīr*.[208] His importance to the Qasimid project was recognized by the Ottomans who captured him the same year and, according to al-Sharafī, killed him.[209] This did not however put an end to the al-Ḥamāṭī participation in politics. The lead was taken over by the son of the *qāḍī*, ʿAlī b. Yūsuf, seemingly not entirely of his own volition. Imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim appointed him to Ānis and Dhamār shortly after Yūsuf al-Ḥamāṭī was captured by the Ottomans, denying ʿAlī an opportunity to continue his studies with the imam.[210] ʿAlī al-Ḥamāṭī from then until his murder in 1014/1605 was commanding the tribes of al-Ḥayma and leading military operations in the area.

The al-Ḥamāṭīs were not a unique scholarly family serving the Qasimids in this fashion. The Ibn Abī al-Rijāl and the al-Akwaʿ families are two others whose authority was used by the Qasimids for military and political purposes. The Ibn Abī al-Rijāl family that claimed Qurashī descent through the caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb rose to prominence in the Qasimid period when several members of the family sided with the Qasimids, combining their scholarly training with

[206] al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 1, p. 498.
[207] al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, ff. 127a, 129b, 138b-140a, 157b.
[208] Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 132a.
[209] Al-Sharafī, NF C.101.ar, ff. 139b-140b.
[210] Al-Sharafī, NF C.101.ar, f. 157b.

military leadership.[211] They resided in Dhī Bīn, a *hijra* in Ḥāshid territory, which made them powerful allies. ʿAlī b. Aḥmad, his son Aḥmad b. ʿAlī, his cousin al-Hādī b. ʿAbdallāh and al-Hādī's son ʿAbdallāh all joined the Qasimid uprising against the Ottomans in 1006/1597.[212] Qāḍī ʿAlī b. Aḥmad Ibn Abī al-Rijāl in particular played an important role in the operations of the early Qasimid imamate. Using the scholarly influence of his family, he combined the façade of teaching with covert financial operations on behalf of the imam.[213] The family's stance in the land of the Ḥāshid tribes, secured this qāḍī his first appointment as Qasimid wālī of *bilād Ḥāshid.*[214]

The no less remarkable al-Akwaʿ family with its strong links to Yemeni tribes also sided early on with the rising Qasimid imams. The faqīhs ʿAlī b. Ṣāliḥ al-Akwaʿ (d. 1053/1643), and his sons ʿIzz al-Dīn, Muḥammad (d. 1048/1638) and Ḥasan (d. 1064/1653) all served imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim in military capacities.[215] ʿIzz al-Dīn b. ʿAlī, for example, took over responsibilities in al-Ḥayma after the murder of ʿAlī b. Yūsuf al-Ḥamāṭī. The authority and power of these scholars is best reflected in the biography of *qāḍī* Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-Akwaʿ. His contemporary Ibn Abī al-Rijāl described him as a *wālī* with a quasi-independent stance gained through the trust of the imams in him.[216] There are even records of some contemporaries speaking of Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-Akwaʿ as a

[211] al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 1, p. 674.
[212] al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, ff. 142b ,171b, 172a, 253a.
[213] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 3, pp. 206–07.
[214] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, vol. 3, p. 209.
[215] al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, ff. 154a, 171a, 176b, 251a, 257a. Muṭahhar b. Muḥammad al-Jurmūzī, *Bināʾ al-dawla al-qāsimīya fī-l-Yaman fi ʿahd al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad ibn al-Qāsim, 990-1054 / 1582-1644. Maʿa taḥqīq makhṭūṭat al-Jawhara al-munīra fī jumal min ʿuyūn al-sīra (juzʾān) li-l-Muṭahhar ibn Muḥammad al-Jurmūzī. Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, ed. Amat al-Malik Ismāʿīl Qāsim al-Thawr (Ṣanʿāʾ: Muʾassasat al-imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-thaqāfīya, 2008), vol. 1, pp. 338–39.
[216] *fa-ʾinnahu fī-l-ghālib mutawallī dāʾiman lakinnahā wilāya shabīha bi-l-istiqlāl li-ḥusn ẓann al-aʾimma fīhi wa-li-wajh al-khibra.* Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 2, pp. 75–77.

potential imam.[217] It is, however, doubtful that the trust of the imams alone was sufficient to achieve it, and the family background, respected both by scholars and by the tribes, certainly played an important role in the ability of the al-Akwaʿ to maintain this position of independence.

The fact that the Ibn Abī al-Rijāl and al-Akwaʿ families in the Qasimid period embraced their scholarly status and their close association with the state indicates an important shift in the relations between scholars and the Zaydi state. Now, the scholars saw the state as the preferable path to realizing their potential as political actors. These families did not forge close relations with the Sharaf al-Dīns or the Ottomans; in the case of the al-Akwaʿ one of the reasons for their alliance with imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim was their earlier allegiance to the Ṣaʿda al-Muʾayyadī imams.[218] They nevertheless influenced by the trends that they witnessed, in particularly, the increasing role of scholars in Ottoman administration; perhaps, they sided with the Qasimids, hoping that in the new imamate they would gain a more prestigious position. The *qāḍī*s, by bringing together their scholarly credentials as well as their knowledge of the regions (both through family relations with the tribes and by virtue of their residence in *hijra*s) were indispensable to the success of the rising Qasimid imamate.

As the Qasimid political project gained complexity, more Zaydi scholars were drawn into the administrative channels of the new Zaydi state. From the first year of the Qasimid uprising, scholars who sided with the imam took on administrative tasks. Earlier, we came across *qāḍī* ʿAlī b. Aḥmad Ibn Abī al-Rijāl, who fulfilled financial duties for imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim. But it is notable that this scholar, whose tasks were administrative, was not, judging by the evidence from

[217] His contemporary qāḍī Yaḥyā b. Aḥmad al-Mikhlāfī is recorded in Ibn Abī al-Rijāl's dictionary saying that "if faqīhs could qualify for the imamate, Ḥasan b. ʿAlī would qualify" (*law ṣalaḥ li-l-imāma min al-fuqahāʾ ṣalaḥa lahā al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī*). Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, vol. 2, p. 77.
[218] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, vol. 1, p. 338. See also chapter 3 of this dissertation on a discussion of the role of Āl al-Muʾayyad circles in the early Qasimid imamate.

contemporaries, known for an elegant writing style.[219] This is an indication of how mastery of the language of official and literary communication was a specialization, not a by-product, of education. As time went by, the Qasimid imams became more concerned with the quality of their bureaucratic skills. Through their dealings with the Ottomans they became aware of the value of good writing style in administrators. One the earliest Qasimid scholar-bureaucrats described in the sources as having the style, manners, and attitudes of a statesman is *qāḍī* Saʿd al-Dīn b. Ḥusayn al-Miswarī who was the leader of the first group of negotiators dealing with the Ottomans to secure a truce for imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim in 1006/1597.[220]

The nascent Qasimid imamate attracted scholar-bureaucrats of different backgrounds. *Qāḍī* ʿĀmir b. Muḥammad al-Dhamārī al-Ṣabāḥī (d. 1045/1635) grew up as a Shafiʿi in Lower Yemen but decided to join imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim due to an injustice suffered by his family at the hands of the Ottomans.[221] *Qāḍī* Ḥasan b. Saʿīd al-ʿAyzarī, whose family originated from the Bakīl tribes residing near Shahāra, the center of the Qasimid imamate, was entrusted by imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim with financial tasks.[222] Faqīh Yaḥyā b. Ṣalāḥ al-Thulāʾī served the imam among the Banū Ḥajjāj.[223] Later on these early administrators of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim became part of the influential group of *qāḍī*s who ensured the transition of power to imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad.[224] Faqīh Muḥammad al-Jamlūlī and his son ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Jamlūlī (d. 1043/1633) were early supporters of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim, both of them, due to the family's strong links among the tribes, in a negotiating capacity.[225] ʿAlī b. Muḥammad was a member of the first diplomatic

[219] Ibn al-Qāsim, *Ghāyat al-amānī fī akhbār al-quṭr al-yamānī*, vol. 3, p. 207.
[220] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 2, p. 322.
[221] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, vol. 3, p. 20.
[222] al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 2, p. 1148. al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 157a.
[223] al-Sharafī, NF C.101.ar, f. 207a.
[224] al-Sharafī, NF C.101.ar, f. 222ab.
[225] al-Sharafī, NF C.101.ar, f. 148b.

delegation sent by imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim to negotiate with the Ottomans and their allies in 1006/1597.[226] Eventually, having earned the trust of the Qasimids, he rose to the position of *qāḍī* in Kawkabān.[227] The careers of the scholars under the first Qasimid imam demonstrate that their bets were well placed – having struggled through the uncertainty of the war against the Ottomans, they eventually ascended to positions of power once the imamate stabilized.

The early association with the imam in combination with study sessions with imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim allowed the descendants of these scholars to continue their ascent through social and state hierarchies. The son of Saʿd al-Dīn al-Miswarī, Aḥmad b. Saʿd al-Dīn (d. 1079/1668), who was a student of the imam, became the first *wazīr* of the Qasimid imamate, under the imams al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim and al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim.[228] His importance to the Qasimid imamate is fully recognized in his detailed biography in Ibn Abī al-Rijāl's biographical dictionary and in the collection of his letters preserved in a unique manuscript.[229] The son of *qāḍī* Aḥmad b. ʿĀmir al-Dhamārī (d. 1045/1635), served one of the sons of the imam, Ḥasan, in a military capacity.[230] The Jamlūlīs continued to enjoy a prestigious position in society and hold high administrative posts.[231] The son of Ḥasan b. Saʿīd al-ʿAyzarī, Ibrāhīm (d. 1071/1661), became the *qāḍī* and secretary of imam al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl.[232]

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[226] al-Sharafī, NF C.101.ar, f. 149a.
[227] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 3, p. 340; al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 1, p. 353.
[228] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 1, pp. 302–14.
[229] NF F.203.ar.
[230] al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, f. 253ab; Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 1, p. 328.
[231] Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Jamlūlī is the patron of NF E.56.ar, produced in 1078/1667 (NF E.56.ar, f. 128a). Zayd b. ʿAlī al-Jamlūlī seems to have reached such a position of power that the Qasimid imam al-Mahdī Muḥammad, also known as ṣāḥib al-Mawāhib (r. 1097-1130/1686-1718) thought it wiser to execute him, allegedly for corruption and interest in astrology. al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 1, p. 353.
[232] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 1, p. 142.

The family maintained their elevated status in the next generation as well, as is evidenced in patronage statements.[233] These examples demonstrate that the strong alliance between certain scholarly families and the Qasimid imamate, forged during the war against the Ottomans, continued to be maintained for at least another century, or three generations of rulers and supporters.

In response to the expanding geopolitical aspirations of the Qasimid imamate, Zaydi scholars embraced a new diplomatic function. This is showcased in the biography and works of *qāḍī* Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ al-Ḥaymī (d. 1071/1661). Al-Ḥaymī, originally from Kawkabān, was one of the first Zaydi Yemeni diplomats and another representative of the professionalized educated class that became more forceful in the new Qasimid imamate.[234] Like Ibn Abī al-Rijāl he combined extensive traditional learning, literary talents and administrative functions, becoming one of the *asāṭīn al-dawla,* "pillars of the state" of imam al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl. He is most famous for leading a diplomatic mission to Ethiopia in 1057-1059/1647-1649 the report on which is known as *Sīrat al-Ḥaymī ilā bilād al-Ḥabasha.* Aside from the mission to Ethiopia, he participated in negotiations with the sultans of Kathīr in Hadramawt, and in Yemen itself, between members of the Qasimid dynasty. Like Ibn Abī al-Rijāl, al-Ḥaymī was not a sayyid. In an ownership statement he signed as Ḥasan b. Aḥmad al-Ḥaymī al-Kamālī al-Yūsufī, without using the nisba al-Qurashī that he was entitled to.[235] Thus, once again, we see a new type of "servant of the state", who is not seeking fame in his genealogy, but is proud of the work that he does for the imam and his state.

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[233] A manuscript copied in 1100/1689 and proclaiming allegiance to imam al-Mahdī Muḥammad (ṣāḥib al-Mawāhib), was copied on the orders of a scion of the ʿAyzarī family, *qāḍī* Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī al-ʿAyzarī. NF F.4.ar, f. 219b.

[234] Ibn Abī l-Rijāl, *Maṭlaʿ al-budūr*, vol. 2, p. 14. Ibn Abī al-Rijāl knew al-Ḥaymī personally and considered him a close friend: *fa-la-qad kuntu minhu bi-manzilat al-ṣinw al-shaqīq wa-l-ḥamīm al-rafīq al-shafīq aʿrifu aḥwālahu ... ijmālan wa tafṣīlan.* In another source he is called *qāḍī al-quḍāt,* i.e. head judge; this is not confirmed in his biography in Ibn Abī al-Riǰāl. NF H.22.ar, f. 33a.

[235] NF D.316.ar, f. 2a, dated 1055/1645.

This new type of bureaucrat is another sign of state transformation in Yemen and signals the shift to a professional class of administrators.

The introductory pages of this diplomatic report speak to this phenomenon. Al-Ḥaymī remarks that he wrote down the story of his journey not because it is a scholarly work the analysis of which requires specialized (traditional) knowledge.[236] He positions his work as a witness statement, short and business-like. He is somewhat insincere in remarking that it is simple since he includes poetry of his own composition in this report. It blends the genres of travelogue and administrative report, includes both literary passages and information of strategic, geographical and commercial relevance. It is a geopolitical statement on the wide-ranging interests of the Qasimid imamate and a professional statement of an educated person working in the service of this state.

The presence of scholars in Qasimid historical sources is more visible than at any other point in Zaydi history, suggesting that they made up a larger proportion of the political elite than in the earlier periods and fulfilled more functions associated with the state. The Qasimid period was formative for a number of influential scholarly and bureaucratic families that increasingly resisted oversight from the central government in questions of revenue collection. In 1076/1665 a conflict began in Baraṭ between Aḥmad b. Ḥasan b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim and the *ʿulamāʾ* of the banū al-ʿAnsī who collected taxes there. Aḥmad wanted to install his own tax collectors and officials (*ʿummāl*), but the local *qāḍīs* did not want a mediator (*wāsiṭa*) between them and the central government. They wrote letters to the imam and defended their taxation privileges. This episode points to several things: that the *qāḍīs* were expected to be the people of the state working on the ground. They were trusted with tax collection, but the Qasimid state wanted more clarity on

[236] *Lā yataʿallaq bi-riwāyatihi maʿrifat al-isnād wa-l-irsāl.* Cited based on facsimile of manuscript in Donzel, *A Yemenite Embassy to Ethiopia, 1647-1649: Al-Ḥaymī's Sīrat al-Ḥabasha Newly Introduced, Translated and Annotated*, 88.

their doings. However, due to their tribal background and religious status, the local *qāḍīs* and scholars had enough sway to bully the center into doing their bidding.[237] Not all these overtures were receiving support from the local population. The early Qasimid period saw tensions between the *qāḍīs* appointed as *wālīs* in various regions and tribes that resisted them, especially in matters of taxation.[238] From the data I have now it is unclear what the tribes were resisting in these situations – taxation in principle, especially taxation implemented by a non-local, centrally appointed official, or actual abuse of position by these appointees.

Another phenomenon that was enabled by the close alliance between the Qasimids and their scholars-bureaucrats was the rise of administrative dynasties. The development of administrative dynasties seems to be linked to the achievement of a more advanced centralization of the state and an overall higher complexity of the system. At the same time, administrative families challenged the power of the central state. There are many examples of "administrative dynasties" in the Islamic world, starting with the Barmakids of the Abbasids. A closer example (both geographically and temporally) is the administrative families of late Mamluk Egypt.[239] In the Ottoman Empire, two administrative dynasties – the Çandarlı and the Köprülü – played key roles at turning points of the Empire's development.[240] In Yemen, administrative families are mostly known in

[237] Al-Wazīr, *Ṭabaq al-ḥilwā,* p. 205.
[238] On complaints about Jaʿfar al-Jurmūzī's policies in al-ʿUdayn see Ibn al-Qāsim, *Bahjat al-zamān*, vol. 2, p. 875.
[239] Wakako Kumakura, "Who Handed over Mamluk Land Registers to the Ottomans? A Study on the Administrators of Land Records in the Late Mamluk Period," *Mamluk Studies Review*, no. 18 (2014): 279–98.
[240] İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Çandarlı vezir ailesi*, Türk Tarih Kurumu yayınlarından. VII. dizi ; sa. 66. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1974); Dimitri Kastritsis, "Tales of Viziers and Wine: Interpreting Early Ottoman Narratives of State Centralization," ed. Jo Van Steenbergen, *Trajectories of State Formation across Fifteenth-Century Islamic West-Asia*, n.d., 224–54; M. Tayyib Gökbilgin, "Köprülüler," in *Islam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul, 1955); Muhammed Fatih Çalışır, "A Virtuous Grand Vizier: Politics and Patronage in the Ottoman Empire during the

Lower Yemen. In the Rasulid period, such administrative dynasties formed in Aden and were linked to the greater bureaucratization necessary to control the trade routes that passed through this port.[241] In particular, the Banū Muʿaybid sought to control the profitable customs office of the port and accumulate capital to increase their chances of rising through the ranks.[242] The development of administrative dynasties in the Qasimid period signals the increased complexity of the state administration, as well as a need for a higher level of professionalism among the bureaucrats. In principle, these families took upon themselves the task of guarantor of the quality of administration.

In the Qasimid period, for the first time in Zaydi history, administrative dynasties formed, at all levels of the administrative hierarchy. At the top of this hierarchy were the dynasties of *wazīr*s. One successful administrative dynastic project was the al-Jurmūzī family. Muṭahhar b. Muḥammmad al-Jurmūzī (d. 1077/1666), the author of the biographies (*sīras*) of the first three Qasimid imams, was the founder of this dynasty.[243] Muṭahhar al-Jurmūzī was an advisor of imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad in negotiations with Aḥmad Faḍlī Pasha, then an appointed *wālī* of al-Ḥajra, the overseer of negotiations with the tribes of al-Ḥayma, and the provisioner of the army of the imam during the siege of Ṣanʿāʾ and the campaign in Tihāma.[244] After the Ottomans left Yemen, al-Jurmūzī was appointed as *wālī* and *qāḍī* to ʿUtma and Wuṣāb, areas to the south-west

Grand Vizierate of Fazil Ahmed Pasha (1661-1676)" (Washington, D.C., Georgetown University, 2016).

[241] Éric Vallet, *L'Arabie marchande: État et commerce sous les sultans rasūlides du Yémen (626-858/1229-1454)*, Bibliothèque historique des pays de l'Islam (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2010), 271.

[242] Vallet, 271–72.

[243] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, vol. 1, p. 160; al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 1, pp. 319–20.

[244] al-Jurmūzī, *al-Jawhara al-munīra*, vol. 1, pp. 161–63.

of Ṣanʿāʾ known for their agricultural revenue.[245] His career under imam al-Muʾayyad ensured that his sons too achieved high positions in the Qasimid administration. Jaʿfar b. Muṭahhar (d. 1096/1685) held appointments as *wālī* of al-ʿUdayn, and then became the *kātib* and *wazīr* of ʿAbdallāh b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim.[246] Jaʿfar b. Muṭahhar fully subscribed to his new identity as a scholar-bureaucrat, and compared himself to famous Buyid bureaucrats, the *wazīr* al-Ṣāḥib Ibn ʿAbbād (d. 385/995) and Abū Isḥāq al-Ṣābiʾ (d. 384/994).[247] Ḥusayn b. Muṭahhar, was appointed to ʿUtma after his father's death.[248] Ḥasan b. Muṭahhar (d. 1100/1688), became first the *wālī* of Ḥarāz and then in 1080/1669 governor of the port of Mocha, a lucrative position in the age of the coffee trade.[249] All members of this distinguished administrative family were known for their literary gifts, which supports our earlier thesis on the adabization of the scholarly-bureaucratic class in Yemen in this period.[250] Their traces do not disappear in later centuries, as they continue to hold prominent positions in Zaydi society.[251]

The Fāyiʿ family of *wazīr*s is a later example of a Zaydi administrative dynasty. The biographies of the Fāyiʿ sayyids demonstrate how the bureaucratic career trends continued in the later

[245] al-Jurmūzī, vol. 1. pp. 164-65; al-Wazīr, *Ṭabaq al-ḥalwā*, 210; Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muhammad al-Shawkānī*, 45.
[246] al-Wazīr, *Ṭabaq al-ḥalwā*, 253–54; Ibn al-Qāsim, *Bahjat al-zamān*, vol. 2, pp. 732, 875.
[247] al-Shawkānī, *Al-Badr al-ṭāliʿ bi-maḥāsin man baʿd al-qarn al-sābiʿ*, vol. 1, p. 183.
[248] al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 1, p. 319.
[249] al-Maqḥafī, vol. 1, p. 319; al-Wazīr, *Ṭabaq al-ḥalwā*, 262; al-Shawkānī, *Al-Badr al-ṭāliʿ bi-maḥāsin man baʿd al-qarn al-sābiʿ*, vol. 1, pp. 210–11.
[250] al-Kawkabānī, *Ṭīb al-samar fī awqāt al-saḥar*, vol. 2, pp. 233–72. The dictionary of Zaydi litterateurs includes the biographies of seven sons of Muṭahhar al-Jurmūzī, four grandsons, and a distant relative al-Hādī b. Aḥmad b. Zakī al-Dīn al-Jurmūzī. Ḥasan b. Muṭahhar al-Jurmūzī copied the *dīwān* of his contemporary Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Jābir al-Haba, now preserved in Istanbul Millet Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi. See the colophon: AE Arabi 3327, f. 82a.
[251] One piece of evidence is the continued expansion of the family's library: Aḥmad b. Ḥasan b. Muṭahhar al-Jurmūzī is the copyist and owner of NF F.303.ar (ff. 1a, 7a), NF C.25.ar (f. 59a), NF F. 313.ar (f. 27a). NF E.97.ar, bought in 1077/1667 by Jaʿfar b. Muṭahhar, remains in his family for three generations (f. 1a, 14a).

Qasimid period. Ismāʿīl b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Fāyiʿ (d. 1188/1775) can be considered the founder of this dynasty.[252] His father, Muḥammad b. ʿAlī (d. 1143/1730), moved from Ṣaʿda to Ṣanʿāʾ where his sons, Aḥmad, Yaḥyā, Muḥsin and Ismāʾīl, went on to pursue careers in the new Qasimid imamate.[253] The initial push for the family came from the prestigious horse trade, in which Muḥammad b. ʿAlī excelled, eventually receiving a commission from the imam Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib (al-Mahdī Muḥammad, d. 1130/1718) to handle his acquisitions.[254] Ismāʿīl first joined the administration of Muḥsin b. Ḥusayn b. al-imām al-Mahdī in the 1120s/1710s, and he served the imams al-Mutawakkil Qāsim (d. 1139/1726), al-Manṣūr Ḥusayn (d. 1161/1748) and al-Mahdī ʿAbbās (d. 1189/1775) both as *wazīr* and as the procurer of horses.[255] His brother Muḥsin also held administrative positions. His responsibilities revolved around the registration of the poor and the distribution of financial means from the *bayt al-māl* to them; later in his career he was the *wālī* of Jibla and a *kātib* of imam al-Mahdī ʿAbbās.[256] He was known for his *ḥumaynī* poetry, as much as for his investments into construction of mosques, and building used for charitable purposes.[257] As we see, members of this family had no claims to be scholars and instead fully identified with their

[252] Owner of NF E.8.ar (dated 1148) and NF F.234.ar; Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Yūnus Ibn Fand / al-Zuḥayf, *Maʾthir al-abrār fī tafṣīl mujmalāt jawāhir al-akhbār wa yusammā al-lawāḥiq al-nadīya bi-l-ḥadāʾiq al-wardīya (Sharḥ Bassāmat al-sayyid Ṣārim al-dīn al-Wazīr)*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām ʿAbbās al-Wajīh and Khālid Qāsim Muḥammad al-Mutawakkil (Amman: Muʾassasat al-imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-thaqāfīya, 2002), vol. 1, p. 52; al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 2, p. 1204; Mark Wagner, *Like Joseph in Beauty. Yemeni Vernacular Poetry and Arab-Jewish Symbiosis*, Brill Studies in Middle Eastern Literatures (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2009), 73.

[253] al-Maqḥafī, *Muʿjam*, vol. 2, pp. 1204–5. Muḥammad Fāyiʿ, owner of NF D.574.ar; his son Aḥmad b. Muḥammad – owner of NF B.120.ar, and Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad – owner of NF F.109.ar.

[254] Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Zabāra, *Taqārīẓ nashr al-ʿarf li-nubalāʾ al-Yaman baʿd al-alf ilā sanat 1357 hijrīya* (Ṣanʿāʾ: Markaz al-dirāsāt wa-l-buḥūth al-Yamanī, n.d.), vol. 1, pp. 406–7.

[255] Zabāra, vol. 1, pp. 404–407.

[256] Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Zabāra, *Nubalāʾ al-Yaman bi-qarn al-thānī ʿashar li-l-hijra: al-qism al-thānī min nashr al-ʿarf li-nubalāʿ al-Yaman baʿd al-alf ilā sanat 1375 hijrīya*, 2nd ed. (Ṣanʿāʾ: Markaz al-dirāsāt wa-l-buḥūth al-Yamanī, 1985), vol. 1, pp. 378–79.

[257] Zabāra, vol. 2, pp. 379, 380–81.

status as administrators of the Qasimid state. Their service to the imams secured them a high status in society that they were able to pass on to their children. In total, we know of four generations of the family through manuscript ownership statements alone.[258]

Both the Fāyiʿ and the Jurmūzī families, despite sayyid descent, were above all administrative dynasties since their rise to prominence is linked exclusively to their association with the Qasimid state. These families did not have any other source of power but what they derived from association with the new Zaydi state. Hence, they relied on their qualifications as scholars to a greater extent than on their status as descendants of the Prophet. Their case illustrates the shifts in prestige and political capital that underlie the rise of the scholarly class as a whole in Yemen in the Qasimid period. These families also demonstrate that Zaydi bureaucrats and scholars, paralleling developments in the Ottoman Empire at the time, achieve a corporate identity and develop methods for securing their status across generations.[259]

The informal roles of scholars

To conclude this section on the rise of *qāḍī*s in Qasimid politics, let us consider their role in the decision on the accession of imams. The importance of political factions becomes particularly visible as Qasimid imams steadily lost their traditional qualifications as men of both pen and

[258] The son of *wazīr* Ismāʿīl, Ṣalāḥ, was the owner of NF D.556.ar; based on manuscripts now preserved in Turkey, we also know of his grandsons Qāsim b. Ṣalāḥ (owner of Nuruosmaniye 5146) and Ḥasan b. Ṣalāḥ (owner of AE Arabi 2382). His great-great-great-grandson Qāsim b. Ḥasan b. Ṣalāḥ b. Qāsim b. Ṣalāh was a financial administrator (*raʾis katabat al-muḥāsaba*) in the Qasimid imamate of the first half of the twentieth century. Zabāra, *Taqārīẓ nashr al-ʿarf li-nubalāʾ al-Yaman baʿd al-alf ilā sanat 1357 hijrīya*, vol. 1, p. 141.

[259] Madeline C. Zilfi, "Elite Circulation in the Ottoman Empire: Great Mollas of the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 26, no. 3 (January 1, 1983): 318–64

sword.[260] Already during the succession to imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim the support of the *qāḍīs* became necessary, as more than one son of the imam satisfied the qualifications for the imamate. The selection of imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim in rabīʿ al-awwal 1029 / February 1620 was decided during a meeting (*majlis*) of the elites that included sayyids and scholars (see chapter 3). In the end, it was a small group of people including the *qāḍīs* ʿĀmir b. Muḥammad al-Dhamārī and Ḥasan b. Saʿīd al-ʿAyzarī, and sayyids Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī al-Ghurbānī and Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥūthī that proclaimed Muḥammad the imam by giving their pledge to him and citing his achievements.[261] This is the first record of the role of collective decisions in moments of transition in the Qasimid imamate, and a record that attests the importance of the new scholarly-bureaucratic class in the state.

These trends continued throughout the early Qasimid period. The transition of power to al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl was also challenging, as two other members of the Qasimid family, Aḥmad and Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim considered themselves eligible for the imamate, as well as a candidate from the Āl al-Muʾayyad.[262] When imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad died in rajab 1054/ September 1644, the key person in the power transfer, appointed by him, was *qāḍī* Aḥmad b. Saʿd al-Dīn al-Miswarī, who preferred Aḥmad as imam.[263] Upon hearing the news of the death of his brother, Ismāʿīl was encouraged by his entourage, including the *qāḍī*s Muḥammad b. Ṣalāḥ al-Salāmī al-Ānisī (d. 1062/1652) and Ibrāhīm b. Ḥasan b. Saʿīd al-ʿAyzarī (d. 1071/1661, the son of Ḥasan al-ʿAyzarī who was instrumental in the transfer of power to imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad), to make a quick move to announce his imamate in the

[260] Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muhammad al-Shawkānī*, 36–37.
[261] Al-Sharafī, *al-Laʾālī al-muḍīʾa,* NF C.101.ar, ff. 222ab.
[262] al-Wazīr, *Ṭabaq al-ḥalwā*, 100.
[263] al-Wazīr, 98.

local mosque and to receive the *bayʿa* (pledge of allegiance) of those present.[264] Other claimants to the imamate were dealt with afterwards by the supporters of the new imam. Aḥmad b. Ḥasan b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim was brought to complacency by the visit of faqīh Yaḥyā b. Aḥmad al-Baraṭī, and both brothers, Aḥmad and Muḥammad, received from the new imam a generous *iqṭāʿ* offer in Lower Yemen.[265]

Things became even messier after the death of imam al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl in Jumādā II 1087 / August 1676. He was one of the last "classical" Zaydi imams in the sense that he fulfilled both leadership and scholarship requirements for the imamate. After his death, the main contenders were his son Muḥammad b. al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl and Aḥmad b. Ḥasan b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim. The collective decision on the succession was made in a series of meetings by a group of Ṣanʿāʾ dignitaries, among them sayyid Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Ḥasan b. al-imām al-Manṣūr Qāsim, amīr Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn, leading scholars including Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-ʿAnsī, Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Thulāʾī, Aḥmad b. Ṣalāḥ Ibn Abī al-Rijāl, ʿAlī b. Jābir al-Habal, ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mahdī al-Kibsī, and Yaḥyā b. Ghawth al-Dīn b. Muṭahhar (of the Āl Sharaf al-Dīn).[266] There was no unity of opinion in this group: qāḍī Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Qays, for instance, favored Qāsim b. al-imām al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad.[267] ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mahdī al-Kibsī insisted that the group should pledge allegiance to Aḥmad with the support of shaykh Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. ʿIwāḍ al-Asadī (later historians credited them with leadership on the matter).[268] Alternative

[264] al-Wazīr, 99–100.
[265] al-Wazīr, 99, 100–101.
[266] al-Wazīr, 326; Ibn al-Qāsim, *Bahjat al-zamān*, vol. 3, pp. 936–37.
[267] al-Wazīr, *Ṭabaq al-ḥalwā*, 327.
[268] *Wa kān al-mutaqaddim fī mawqif al-bayʿa ilā tamāmihā al-sayyid ʿAbdallāh al-Kibsī wa ʿaḍaduhu fī intihāz al-furṣa al-shaykh al-raʾīs al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmd b. ʿAwāḍ al-Asadī.* al-Wazīr, 327.

candidates were appeased with *wālī* appointments.[269] The two-day-long succession crisis in Jumādā II 1087 / August 1676 vividly demonstrates the increased role of scholars-bureaucrats in the Zaydi imamate, as they become the guarantors of regime continuity and the legitimate transition of power.

One final transition episode that we will consider, is the transfer of power in Jumādā II 1092 / June 1681 after the death of imam al-Mahdī Aḥmad. Al-Mahdī Aḥmad was not recognized as a fully eligible imam by many contemporaries; the seeds of doubt were planted by Aḥmad b. Ṣalāḥ Ibn Abī al-Rijāl who read the first *khuṭba* in his name and referred to him as *muqallid.*[270] The Qasimid historian Yaḥyā b. Ḥusayn refers to him as king, *malik,* and sultan in his obituary.[271] In light of the lack of scholarship on the part of the deceased imam, the scholarly credentials of his successor had to be ascertained. The transfer of the imamate to al-Muʿayyad Muḥammad b. al-imām al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl was made possible not only through his political standing which went unchallenged, but also through the confirmation of his teachers, the *qāḍīs* Yaḥyā al-Dhamārī and Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-ʿAnsī who attested his qualifications.[272]

The episodes of transition of power in the early Qasimid period demonstrate the high involvement of the scholarly and bureaucratic class in these decisions. The convening of meetings of the leading sayyids, scholars and tribal leaders to discuss who should be upheld as the new imam is evocative of the concepts of *shūra* and *al-riḍā min āl Muḥammad* that was considered the

[269] Ibn al-Qāsim, *Bahjat al-zamān*, vol. 3, p. 938.
[270] Ibn al-Qāsim, vol. 3, pp. 938–39.
[271] Ibn al-Qāsim, vol. 3, pp. 1142–43. The historian also claimed that the imam had 700 concubines who were following him wherever he went, clearly not something that a society and ruling family that rose to power through hardship and military effort could welcome.
[272] Ibn al-Qāsim, vol. 3, p. 1144.

main principle for legitimate transitions of power in the early Islamic empire.[273] Such events make visible the political power that the Zaydi literati gained through cooperation with successive political regimes in the early modern period.

Imam al-Muʿayyad Muḥammad was the last of the early Qasimid rulers whose succession occurred in relative peace. After his death in Jumādā II 1097/ May 1686, a war ensued among the many candidates for the imamate, resulting in the rise of imam al-Mahdī Ṣāḥib al-Mawāhib (d. 1130/1718). His rule ushered in the beginning of a purely dynastic period in the history of the Qasimid imamate, during which patrilineal transmission of power was not challenged.[274] The study of the role of scholars and bureaucrats in that period lies outside the scope of this project.

Conclusion

From the late fifteenth to the seventeenth century scholars in Zaydi Yemen as a social group underwent a profound transformation. Over the course of the sixteenth century, they transformed from secluded literati with predominantly religious ambitions to key political figures. Under the influence of structural institutional transformations introduced by the Ottoman regime in Yemen they developed a corporate identity and started to dominate the administrative system of the new Qasimid imamate. The literati of Zaydi Yemen in the early modern period developed diverging career tracks for administrators and a separate path for religious scholars. These career tracks often converged, and transitions from the scholarly path to the administrative remained possible. While more evidence is necessary to ascertain the extent of this division, the increasing

[273] Patricia Crone, "On the Meaning of the ʿAbbasid Call to Al-Riḍā," in *The Islamic World from Classical to Modern Times. Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis*, ed. C. E. Bosworth et al. (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1989), 95–111.
[274] Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muhammad al-Shawkānī*, 47–56.

importance of scholars and literati in the Zaydi administration remains clear. Moreover, the collective importance of Zaydi scholars resulted in a new political function – making decisions on imamic succession. This rise in importance played a role in the formation of the *qāḍī* caste-like group of Zaydi society.

Conclusion

Our exploration of Yemen's early modern history followed three political projects – the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate, the Ottoman provincial government and the Qasimid imamate. All three political regimes were able to rise on the political scene due to contingent factors as much as the particulars of their approach to governing Yemen. The success of these regimes depended on their capacity to adapt to changing circumstances in the region and develop modes of cooptation of local elites.

The trajectory of the three political formations can be summarized in the following way: the pre-Ottoman Sharaf al-Dīn arrangement was built on close collaboration of the imam with sayyids and was still deeply influenced by ideas of Zaydi legitimacy. Due to chance (the arrival of a Mamluk force that overthrew the southern Tahirid dynasty) the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate was able to expand beyond the territories that were usually under the control of Zaydi imams. The expansion of the territory and the integration of a broader population created a need for the development of more sophisticated state institutions, in particular, an administrative apparatus and a reliable army. Eventually, the leaders of the imamate succeeded in laying the foundation for these institutions but failed to develop a method for the intergenerational transfer of power. For ideological reasons, the imam was not considering the formation of a dynasty. This led to a crisis of succession and eventually the waning of the Sharaf al-Dīn state.

The Ottoman project exhibited an impressive flexibility in its approaches to integrating local elites that allowed this outside regime to control Yemen for a century. It expanded its political support base by providing non-sayyid elites in Yemen, scholars, and tribal leaders in particular, with a stake in the administrative apparatus. Despite the inability of Ottoman administrators to

fully integrate into local networks through marriage, the Ottoman political project and its local alliances flourished in a period when Ottoman governors were attuned to the nuances of the Yemeni socio-political structure. This happened because the governors effectively formed a service lineage, the Yemenli Ḥasan Pasha group. However, developments beyond the control of these governors, namely the transfer of the decision-making center from the heart of the Ottoman Empire to Egypt and the limited capacities of Ottoman Egypt to establish control in the region, undermined the balance of power. Once local Ottoman institutional knowledge was undermined, the Ottoman project gave way to a new political system.

The Qasimid imamate rose as a rival to the Ottoman system in Yemen and therefore had to develop a flexible approach to its enemies. Because the founder of the dynasty was not a member of the pre-Ottoman or Ottoman period Yemeni sayyid elite, he had to rely on a coalition of sayyid and non-sayyid elites. In addition to changing the balance of political elites, the Qasimid imamate succeeded where the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate failed and established a form of reliable transition of power. Effectively with the consent of the new Qasimid elites a Zaydi dynasty was formed. The experience of Ottoman rule made Yemeni Zaydi political elites more flexible vis-à-vis ideas of dynastic rule, which benefited the rising Qasimid family. This created stability at the top of the political system and formed an even closer connection between the Qasimid rulers and their non-sayyid elites from the scholarly and tribal classes. Due to their alliances and the weaknesses of the Ottoman system, the Qasimids expanded their control in Yemen.

Sayyids and scholars appear at the heart of the political and institutional transformation of Zaydi Yemen in the early modern period. However, the two elite groups had different trajectories in this period. Before the Ottoman century, sayyids dominated Zaydi Yemen's political scene. As descendants of the Prophet and potential future imams they had a strong claim to political

authority. With the expansion of the Sharaf al-Dīn imamate they were effectively putting a seal on their special authority. The Ottoman period, however, ushered in a new distribution of power. In the Ottoman project sayyids were only one of the groups of local elites that the conquerors were coopting. In this period sayyids achieved a further legitimization of their local political claims by benefitting from the Ottoman system of appointments. However, they joined the ranks of Ottoman administrators alongside other local groups. The implications of this process became visible in the Qasimid period. The new dynasty continued the Ottoman practice of affirming sayyids as governors of regions to which their family laid claims. But the Qasimids also curtailed the ability of sayyids to compete for the position of imam, thus excluding them from the top levels of political power. This was achieved through an alliance with non-sayyid scholars.

Scholars in Zaydi Yemen before the Ottoman conquest were a group with little interest in political affairs. Non-sayyid scholars were excluded from the competition for the imamate and there was no state administration for them to pursue a career in. So, Zaydi scholars distanced themselves from political matters. This set up started to give way in the Sharaf al-Dīn period. With the expansion of the imamate, the demand for qualified specialists grew and scholars slowly started to join the administration. The capacity of the Sharaf al-Dīn state was small and we can therefore find only a small number of examples of scholars-bureaucrats in this period. The development of Ottoman rule in the region allowed Zaydi non-sayyid scholars to witness the prestige associated with a bureaucratic career. To the Ottomans they were important allies in the region, and the conqueror sought ways to coopt them. During the peak of the Ottoman presence in the region (the Yemenli Ḥasan Pasha group period) Zaydi scholars started to actively engage with the Ottoman administration. Under the Qasimid dynasty their rise to power continued. Zaydi scholar-bureaucrats, in particular, *qāḍī*s, became a counterbalance to the ambitions of members of the ruling

dynasty. The scholarly class also assumed a legalizing function in the proclaiming of the new imam. Thus, while the sayyids were pushed out of the upper tiers of political activity, the scholars rose to dominate it and fixed their special status by taking on the characteristics of an estate.

Applying a regional lens

This dissertation is limited to an analysis of the situation in Yemen. A desideratum for a future development of this project is to consistently approach the developments in Yemen from a comparative point of view by contrasting them with parallel processes in Arabia, the broader Muslim world and beyond. This comparative agenda can cross regions and periods to clarify what is unique in Yemen's socio-political transformation and what is not. In this concluding section I chart a possible regional comparison by focusing on the formation of a sayyid dynasty in the context of an ideology unfriendly to dynastic succession, the late crystallization of caste-like elite groups in Zaydi Yemen, and the early modern Ottoman strategy in Ethiopia.

The struggles of sayyids to combine the formation of dynasties with legitimation were not unique to Zaydis. On the Arabian Peninsula, the sharifs of Mecca (Ḥasanid line) and Medina (Ḥusaynid line) were facing similar issues. Like the founders of the Zaydi imamate in Yemen, they moved to establish their power in the tenth century.[1] However, unlike their Yemeni counterparts they were not constrained by an ideology that prevented dynasty-formation. Instead, their authority was limited by the lack of indigenous resources that were not dependent on the outside world and the presence of outside forces, from the twelfth century onwards largely Egypt-based, that laid claim to suzerainty in the Hijaz.

[1] Ella Landau-Tasseron, "Arabia," in *The New Cambridge History of Islam: Volume 1: The Formation of the Islamic World, Sixth to Eleventh Centuries*, ed. Chase F. Robinson, vol. 1, The New Cambridge History of Islam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 411–13.

Considered from this comparative point of view, the main constraint on (and at the same empowerment of) sayyid rule in Yemen came from Zaydism as a political theory. According to it, they were the only group who could lay claim to political legitimacy, but their political ambitions were curtailed by the absence of pro-dynastic ideas. Nevertheless, the attraction of the dynastic principle was ever present in Zaydi history and eventually through elite agreement the Qasimid dynasty ruled uncontested, thus becoming one of the last Arabian sayyid dynasties to crystallize.

At the same time, the combination of meritocratic approach to the election of imams and the domination of one social group among the holders of power so characteristic of Zaydi Yemen evokes the Ibadi imamate principles in Oman. There, the selection of the imam, a practice fusing tribal notions of authority with Islamic political theory, was often limited to members of several tribal clans.[2] Taking both the Hijazi and Omani lines of comparison into consideration, the Yemeni Zaydi political tradition appears part of an Arabian spectrum in which tribal notions of authority and Islamic political theory blend together to form varying but related combinations.

While all Arabian sayyids rely on genealogy and control of marriages in the maintenance of their special status, the development of Arabian sayyid dynasties was made possible through coalitions with other elite groups. The sharifs of the Hijaz relied on tribal alliances, to the point of imitating tribal attitudes, as much as negotiations with outside powers. Zaydi sayyids' approaches to alliances were similar, and marriages to daughters of tribal leaders were common. For example, the tribal marriages of imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn, discussed in this dissertation, were an important component of his authority.

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[2] Ella Landau-Tasseron, "Arabia," 434; John C. Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition of Oman,* Cambridge Middle East Library, (Cambridge / New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 200–201, 203–12.

However, as the Zaydi state developed and its bureaucracy expanded, scholars became the allies of choice, and the means for establishing this connection shifted from marriage to patronage, appointments, and study. The rise of Zaydi scholars to power was linked to their ability to merge their tribal background and the Islamic authority to support the legitimacy of the Zaydi imams and originated in the empowerment of the literati in Yemen's Ottoman period and the early Qasimid period. What is peculiar about this alliance is that the *qāḍī*s used their position in Yemeni politics to join the sayyids in forming a closed caste-like elite group, thus guaranteeing the preservation of their elite status across generations.[3] Office holders in many bureaucratizing pre-modern states sought to guarantee their hereditary transfer; this included, for instance, the development of quasi-aristocratic groups of ulama in the eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire, whose elite status like in the case of their Zaydi counterparts, was related to a new form of trust formed between them and the dynasty.[4] It is the formation of an estate as a solution to the hereditary office problem that appears unique in the regional context of the Arabian Peninsula.

Another line of comparison relates to the Ottoman Empire's strategy in the region. In considering the expansion of Ottoman presence in Yemen we focused on its slow spread from the coasts to the highlands, and the importance of personalities and centers of decision-making to the success of the conquest. A similar process can be noted in the coastlands of Eritrea and Ethiopia, where the Ottomans started to establish a presence around the same time as in Yemen. The

[3] Weir and Dresch indicate that *qāḍī*s dressed in the same manner as sayyids in the Northern Yemeni highlands, thus underlining their special status in society and distinction from the common tribesmen. Shelagh Weir, *A Tribal Order: Politics and Law in the Mountains of Yemen*, Modern Middle East Series (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 61; Paul Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen* (Oxford / New York, NY: Clarendon Press / Oxford University Press, 1989), 136.

[4] Madeline C. Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety : The Ottoman Ulema in the Postclassical Age (1600-1800)*, Studies in Middle Eastern History ; No. 8 (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1988), 43–80.

trajectory of the Ottoman conquest on the East African side of the Bab al-Mandab strait moved from the coast to the highlands and dedicated, knowledgeable governors, often with Yemen-connections, such as Özdemir Pasha, the conqueror of Yemen, and his son Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha, and ʿAlī Pasha, played as important a role in Ethiopia as in Yemen.[5] It is possible that Özdemir Pasha relied on his Yemeni experience in designing his campaigns in Ethiopia even if the actual geopolitical and socioreligious structure of this region was different from that of Yemen.

However, the ability of the Ottomans to control Ethiopia was limited. Despite the region's proximity to Egypt, there was no other way for the Ottomans to establish their presence in Ethiopia except by sailing to the coasts and then marching into the highlands. This differed from the situation in Yemen, where land operations from the Hijaz were possible. After Özdemir Pasha, Ottoman control remained limited to the port cities, from Sawākin to Zaylaʿ.[6] The overall focus of Ottoman power in Ethiopia was on trade, a dynamic that also manifested in Yemen in the concluding decades of the Ottoman century. The limited agenda of the imperial power in both cases resulted in a failure to implement a consistent local policy. As a result, Ottoman power in both regions diminished, even though the Ottomans continued to maintain a modicum of presence on the Ethiopian coast till the nineteenth century, which was not the case in Yemen. Both Yemen and Ethiopia experienced shifts because of the Ottoman intervention. This dissertation analyzes institutional repercussions of the Ottoman conquest of Yemen, but there is no comparable effect to the arrival of the Ottomans in Ethiopia. One of the long-term results of the Ottoman intervention in Ethiopia

[5] Cengiz Orhonlu, "Habeş Eyaleti," in *TDV Islam Ansiklopedisi*, 1996; Amélie Chekroun and Bertrand Hirsch, "The Muslim-Christian Wars and the Oromo Expansion," in *A Companion to Medieval Ethiopia and Eritrea*, ed. Samantha Kelly (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2020), 454–76.
[6] The Ottoman province of Ḥabesh also included the port of Jidda on the Arabian coast, which became the headquarters of the province. Işiksal, T., "Ḥabesh," in *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2012.

was that the Christian rulers were forced to seek new trade partnerships with Yemen to circumvent Ottoman control of the ports, a development that affected both sides of the Red Sea in the following "coffee" century.[7]

This tentative application of a regional lens demonstrates that asymmetrical comparisons can provide a sharper identification of what is unique to Yemen. As we have seen, this method can also involve a comparison of regional development under the influence of outside forces, with the Ottoman Empire being a prime example. Such future asymmetrical comparisons would allow for a better understanding of the place of Yemen's socio-political development in global early modern political processes.

[7] On the development of regional geopolitics and trade relations see Emeri Johannes van Donzel, *A Yemenite Embassy to Ethiopia, 1647-1649: Al-Ḥaymī's Sīrat al-Ḥabasha Newly Introduced, Translated and Annotated*, Äthiopistische Forschungen 21 (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1986), 30–53.

Appendix 1. Imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn's network.

Name	Title	Social back-ground	Family / tribe name*	Region of influence	Place of meeting with the imam	Teacher (T) / Supporter (S)/ Official (O) / Student (St)
Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Sulay-mān al-Naḥawī	mutawallī al-ḥukm wa-l-qaḍā	tribe	Madhḥij, al-Naḥawī	Ṣanʿāʾ	n/d	SO
Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. al-Hādī al-Ḥamzī	sayyid	sayyid	Āl al-Ḥamza	n/d	n/d	St
al-Hādī b. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Hādawī	sayyid	sayyid	Āl al-Wazīr	Ṣanʿāʾ	Ṣanʿāʾ	T
al-Mahdī b. ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. al-Hādī al-Ḥamzī	sayyid	sayyid	Āl al-Ḥamza	n/d	n/d	St
al-Muntaṣir b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Wazīr	sayyid	sayyid	Āl al-Wazīr	al-Shaẓab	n/d	SO
al-Nāṣir b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Wazīr	sayyid	sayyid	Āl al-Wazīr	al-Shaẓab	n/d	SO
Dāwud b. Kāmil al-Muḥallī	faqīh	tribe	al-Muḥallī	n/d	n/d	S
Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā b. ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad b. imam Yaḥyā b. Ḥamza	sayyid	sayyid	n/d	n/d n/d	n/d	S
Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Ḥamza al-ʿAlawī	sayyid	sayyid	n/d	n/d	n/d	SO
Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī b. Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b.	sayyid	sayyid	Jaḥḥāf	n/d	n/d	S

Qāsim al-Qāsimī Jaḥḥāf						
Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Ḥakamī	faqīh	tribe	n/d	al-Ẓahrayn	n/d	S
Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh	sayyid	sayyid	Āl al-Wazīr	Ṣanʿāʾ	Ṣanʿāʾ	T
imam al-Manṣūr billāh Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Wushalī al-Sirājī	sayyid	sayyid	al-Wushalī	n/d	Ṣanʿāʾ	T
Muḥammad al-Qāsimī al-Ṣanʿānī	badr al-dīn ḥāfiẓ ʿilm al-qurʾān	sayyid	n/d	Ṣanʿāʾ	n/d	SO
Muḥammad b. al-Hādī al-Ḥasanī al-Niʿmī	sayyid	sayyid	n/d	n/d	n/d	S
Muḥammad b. al-Muntaṣir b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Qasim b. Yusuf b. al-Murtaḍa al-Hādawī	sayyid	sayyid	n/d	al-Hān, bilād Ānis	n/d	SO
Muḥammad b. Dāwud al-Akhāwī al-Ḥayī	faqīh	tribe	al-Ḥayī	hijra ʿIrr Thawmān	n/d	S
Muḥammad b. Dāwud al-Maswarī	faqīh	tribe	al-Maswarī	n/d	n/d	S
Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-Naḥawī	qāḍī	tribe	Madhḥij, al-Naḥawī	Ṣanʿāʾ	n/d	SO
Muḥammad b. Ib-rāhīm al-Ẓafārī	faqīh	tribe	al-Ẓafārī	Ṣanʿāʾ	Ṣanʿāʾ	TSO
Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad b.	sayyid	sayyid	Āl al-Ḥamza	Dhamār, ʿAns, al-Ḥuqūl al-	n/d	SOSt

Aḥmad b. al-Hādī b. imam Yaḥyā b. Ḥamza al-Shawīʿ				Taḥsubīya, bilād Darwām, Jahrān, Ḍawrān		
Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. Rāwiʿ	qāḍī	n/d	n/d	n/d	n/d	St
Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Shāmī	faqīh	tribe	n/d	n/d	n/d	S
Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Hādawī	sayyid	sayyid	n/d	hijrat al-Raḥāʾ	n/d	S
Muḥammad b. ʿUṭfallāh al-ʿAbsī	qāḍī	n/d	n/d	n/d	n/d	St
Qāsim b. Ṣalāḥ b. Muḥammad b. al-Faḍl al-Filayta	sayyid	sayyid	Āl Filayta	n/d	n/d	S
Qāsim b. Yūsuf b. Muʿawwiḍa al-Hānī	faqīh	tribe	al-Hānī	n/d	Ṣanʿāʾ	T
Ṣalāḥ b. Mūsā al-ʿAnbarī	rukn al-dīn	tribe	ʿAnbar	Ṣanʿāʾ	n/d	SO
Ṣalāḥ b. Sirāj allāh al-Muḥallī	faqīh	tribe	al-Muḥallī	n/d	n/d	S
Ṣalāḥ b. Sulaymān b. Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī al-Qāsimī	sayyid	sayyid	n/d	n/d	n/d	S
Ṣalāḥ b. ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. al-Hādī al-Ḥamzī	sayyid	sayyid	Āl al-Ḥamza	n/d	n/d	SOSt
Shams al-Din b. Muḥammad b. Ṣalāḥ al-Hādawī	sayyid	sayyid	n/d	al-Shara-fayn; al-Dhanūb	n/d	SO
Sirāj allāh b. Muḥammad al-ʿAṭṭār	faqīh	tribe	n/d	n/d	n/d	S
Yaḥyā al-Thulāʾī	faqīh	n/d	n/d	n/d	n/d	St

Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Miqrānī al-Ḥārithī al-Madhḥijī	faqīh	tribe	Madhḥij	n/d	n/d	St
Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn al-Bahā al-Qurashī al-ʿUlufī	faqīh	Quraysh	al-ʿUlufī	Ṣanʿāʾ	Ṣanʿāʾ	TSO
ʿAbd al-Ghaffār b. […] b. Abī-l-Najm al-Ṣaʿdī	wajīh al-dīn	n/d	n/d	Ṣanʿāʾ	n/d	SO
ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad b. Mukābir al-Shaẓabī	faqīh	tribe	al-Shaẓabī	hijrat al-Bayāḍ	Ẓafīr Ḥajja	T
ʿAbdallāh b. Masʿūd b. Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAlī al-Ḥiwālī	faqīh	tribe	Ḥimyar / Dhū Ḥiwāl	Ḥajja or al-Ḥujayrīya	Ẓafīr Ḥajja	TS
ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad al-Ghashamī	faqīh	tribe	al-Ghashamī	n/d	n/d	SSt
ʿAbdallāh b. Nājī b. Yaḥyā	faqīh	n/d	n/d	n/d	n/d	St
ʿAbdallāh b. Qāsim al-ʿAlawī	sayyid	sayyid	n/d	n/d	n/d	St
ʿAbdallāh b. Yaḥyā al-Ajārī	qāḍī	n/d	n/d	Ṣanʿāʾ	n/d	SO
ʿAbdallāh b. Yaḥyā al-Nāẓirī	qāḍī	tribe	Ḥāshid, Āl al-Nāẓirī	Hajja, Kawkabān, Ṣanʿāʾ	Ẓafīr Ḥajja	TSO
ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Qurashī al-ʿUlufī*	faqīh	tribe	Quraysh, al-ʿUlufī	n/d	Ṣanʿāʾ	T
ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Nāẓirī	faqīh	tribe	Ḥāshid, Āl al-Nāẓirī	n/d	n/d	S
ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. Mukābir al-Shaẓabī	faqīh	tribe	al-Shaẓabī	hijrat al-Bayāḍ; Khawlān	Ṣanʿāʾ	T

ʿAlī b. al-Jallāl al-ʿAlawī	sayyid	sayyid	n/d	Jabal Tays, al-Shāḥidhīya	n/d	SO
ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Asadī	faqīh	tribe	Banū Asad	n/d	n/d	S
ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Naḥawī	faqīh	tribe	Madhḥij, al-Naḥawī	Ṣanʿāʾ	n/d	SO
ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Filayta	sayyid	sayyid	Āl Filayta	n/d	n/d	S
ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ghashamī	faqīh	tribe	al-Ghashamī	Ṣanʿāʾ	n/d	SO
ʿAlī b. Saʿīd al-Muḍallaʿī	faqīh	tribe	n/d	n/d	n/d	S
ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Ḍamadī	n/d	n/d	al-Ḍamadī al-Nuʿmān	Tihāma	n/d	T
ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā b. Ṣāliḥ al-ʿUlufī	faqīh	tribe	Quraysh, al-ʿUlufī	n/d	Ṣanʿāʾ	TSO
ʿAlī b. ʿAbdallāh b. Rāwiʿ	qāḍī	n/d	n/d	n/d	n/d	St

Sources: al-ʿUlufī, *Sīrat al-imām al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn,* NF A.3.ar, ff. 10a-16b, 93b-95a; Ibn al-Mufaḍḍal, Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm. *Al-Sulūk al-dhahabīya fī khulāṣat al-sīra al-mutawakkilīya*. Edited by Zayd b. ʿAlī al-Fuḍayl. 1st ed. Jidda: Maṭbaʿat al-mafāhīm li-l-ṭibāʿa wa-l-taṣāmīm, 2012, pp. 79-85

Appendix 2. The social networks of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim and al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad

Name	Estate	Family	Geography	*Ṭabaqa* (Jurmuzī1)[1]	*Ṭabaqa* (Jurmūzī2)[2]	Year joined	Hajj MQ[3]	Wālī MQ[4]	service MM[5]	Āl al-Muʾayyad circle
ʿAbd al-Qādir b. Muḥammad	amīr	n/d	Khanfar	n/a	3				yes, 2	
Sunbul b. ʿAbdallāh	amīr	Ottoman	Dhamār, Wuṣāb	n/a	3				yes, 2	
Ḥasan b. Sharaf al-Dīn b. Ṣalāḥ al-Ḥamzī	sayyid	Āl al-Ḥamza	n/d	1	n/a	1006		yes		no
Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ṣalāḥ al-Sharafī	sayyid	Sharafī	Muʿammira	1	2	1006		yes		no
al-Mahdī b. Ibrāhīm b. Jaḥḥāf	sayyid	Jaḥḥāf	n/d	1	2	1006				no
Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm Ibn Jaḥḥāf al-Qāsimī	sayyid	Jaḥḥāf	n/d	1	2	n/d				no
Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī b. al-Jaḥḥāf	sayyid	Jaḥḥāf	n/d	1	n/a	1006		yes		no

[1] Based on the *sīra* of imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim: al-Jurmūzī, Muṭahhar b. Muḥammad. *Kitāb al-nubdha al-mushīra ilā jumal min ʿuyūn al-sīra fī akhbār mawlānā amīr al-muʾminīn wa sayyid al-muslimīn al-manṣūr bi-llāh rabb al-ʿālamīn al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī*. Ṣanʿāʾ: Maktabat al-Yaman al-kubrā, 1980, pp. 44-70.

[2] Based on the *sīra* of imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad: al-Jurmūzī, Muṭahhar b. Muḥammad. *Bināʾ al-dawla al-qāsimīya fī-l-Yaman fi ʿahd al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad ibn al-Qāsim, 990-1054 / 1582-1644. Maʿa taḥqīq makhṭūṭat al-Jawhara al-munīra fī jumal min ʿuyūn al-sīra (juzʾān) li-l-Muṭahhar ibn Muḥammad al-Jurmūzī. Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*. Edited by Amat al-Malik Ismāʿīl Qāsim al-Thawr. Ṣanʿāʾ: Muʾassasat al-imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-thaqāfīya, 2008, vol. 3, pp. 305-363.

[3] i.e. whether the person joined the pilgrimage with the future imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim.

[4] i.e. whether the person was appointed to a governorship by imam al-Manṣūr Qāsim.

[5] i.e. whether the person was appointed to an administrative position by imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad.

Ṣalāḥ b. ʿAbd al-Khāliq b. Yaḥyā al-Ḥabūrī	sayyid	Jaḥḥāf	n/d	1	2	n/d				no
Dāwūd b. al-Hādī al-Muʾayyadī	sayyid	Muʾay-yadī	n/d	1	2	1029			yes, 1	yes
al-Ṭayyib b. Aḥmad al-Muʾayyadī	sayyid	Muʾay-yadī	n/d	1	n/a	1006				yes
Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Muʾayyadī	sayyid	Muʾay-yadī	n/d	1	n/a	1016				no
ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qāsimī	sayyid	n/d	Ḥaydān	1	3	n/d		yes	yes, 1	no
Amīr al-Dīn b. ʿAbdallāh b. Nahshal	sayyid	n/d	n/d	1	2	1006		yes		yes
Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Ḥūthī	sayyid	n/d	Ḥūth	1	2	n/d				no
Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Miḥrābī* al-Hādawī	sayyid	n/d	Miḥrāb	1	2	1006				no
Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbdallāh ʿUshaysh	sayyid	n/d	Ḥūth	1	2	n/d				no
ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Miḥrābī	sayyid	n/d	Miḥrāb	1	2	1006		yes		no
Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Hādawī	sayyid	n/d	Miḥrāb	1	n/a	1006		yes		no
Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Rughāfī al-Hādawī	sayyid	n/d	n/d	1	n/a	n/d				no
Aḥmad b. ʿĀmir b. ʿAlī	sayyid	n/d	n/d	1	n/a	1006				no

Muḥammad b. Ṣalāḥ al-Qaṭābirī	sayyid	n/d	Qaṭābir	1	n/a	1006		yes		no
Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. al-Hādī al-Ḥusaynī al-Ḥūthī	sayyid	n/d	Ḥūth	1	n/a	n/d				no
Yaḥyā b. Ṣalāḥ al-Qaṭābirī	sayyid	n/d	Qaṭābir	1	n/a	n/d				no
ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm b. ʿAlī al-ʿĀlim	sayyid	n/d	n/d	1	n/a	1006				no
ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Hādawī al-Jidayrī	sayyid	n/d	Khawlān	1	n/a	1006				no
ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Miḥrābī* al-Hādawī	sayyid	n/d	Miḥrāb	1	n/a	1006				no
ʿĀmir b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad	sayyid	Qasimid	n/d	1	n/a	1006		yes		no
Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī al-Ghurbānī	sayyid	ʿIyyānī	n/d	1	2	1006		yes		no
ʿAlī b. Ṣalāḥ al-Qāsimī al-ʿUbbālī	sayyid	ʿUbbālī	Ḥaydān	1	n/a	1006				no
Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ḥamzī	sayyid	Āl al-Ḥamza	Kuḥlān	2	2	1006				no
ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Sharafī	sayyid	Sharafī	n/d	2	2	n/d				no
ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad b. Ṣalāḥ al-Sharafī	sayyid	Sharafī	n/d	2	2	n/d				no
Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Ṣalāḥ al-Sharafī	sayyid	Sharafī	n/d	2	n/a	1022				no
Ibrāhīm b. Yaḥyā al-Jaḥḥāfī	sayyid	Jaḥḥāf	Ẓulayma; Ḥajūr	2	2	n/d			yes	no

Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Luqmān	sayyid	Luqmān	Shibām Kawkabān; Kuḥlān Tāj al-Dīn	2	2	1028				no
Aḥmad b. al-Mahdī b. Muḥammad al-Muʾayyadī	sayyid	Muʾayyadī	n/d	2	2	1022			yes, 1	yes
Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Ḥasan al-Shāmī	sayyid	n/d	n/d	2	2	1022			yes, 1	no
Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Qaṭābirī	sayyid	n/d	Qaṭābir	2	2	n/d			yes, 1&2	no
Qāsim b. Najm al-Dīn al-Qāsimī	sayyid	n/d	Jabal Dharī, Miḥrāb	2	2	n/d				no
Ḥasan b. al-imām al-Qāsim	sayyid	Qasimid	n/d	2	2	1006			yes, 1 & 2	no
Ḥusayn b. al-imām al-Qāsim	sayyid	Qasimid	n/d	2	2	1006			yes, 1&2	no
imam al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad b. al-imām al-Qāsim	sayyid	Qasimid	n/d	2	n/a	1006				no
Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ghurbānī	sayyid	ʿIyyānī	n/d	2	2	1016				no
Nāṣir b. Muḥammad al-Ghurbānī	sayyid	ʿIyyānī	n/d	2	2	n/d				no
ʿAbdallāh b. Qāsim b. Yaḥyā al-ʿIyyānī	sayyid	ʿIyyānī	n/d	2	n/a	n/d				no
Muḥammad b. ʿIzz al-Dīn b. Muḥammad al-Muʾayyadī	sayyid	Muʾayyadī	Ṣanʿāʾ	1a	2	n/d				no
Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī b.	sayyid	Muʾayyadī	Ṣanʿāʾ	1a	n/a	1038				yes

Ḥusayn b. imam ʿIzz al-Dīn										
ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn b. imam ʿIzz al-Dīn	sayyid	Muʾay-yadī	Ṣaʿda	1a	n/a	1010				yes
ʿIzz al-Dīn b. Muḥammad al-Muʾayyadī	sayyid	Muʾay-yadī	Ṣanʿāʾ	1a	n/a	n/d				yes
Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥūthī	sayyid	n/d	Ṣanʿāʾ	1a	n/a	n/d				no
Ṣalāḥ b. Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh Ibn al-Wazīr	sayyid	Wazīr	Ṣanʿāʾ	1a	n/a	n/d				no
Hāshim b. Ḥāzim b. Rājiḥ Ibn Abī Numayy	sayyid	Abū Numayy	Mecca, Ti-hāma	n/a	2				yes, 2	
ʿAlī b. Ḥasan b. Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ḥamzī	sayyid	Āl al-Ḥamza	Kuḥlān	n/a	2					
Muḥammad b. Ib-rāhīm b. al-Mufaḍḍal	sayyid	Āl Sharaf al-Dīn	Kawkabān	n/a	2					
Aḥmad b. Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. Ḥamīd al-Dīn	sayyid	Āl Sharaf al-Dīn; Āl Muṭahhar	n/d	n/a	2					
Ḥasan b. Ṣalāḥ al-Sharafī	sayyid	Sharafī	al-Sharaf al-asfal	n/a	3				yes, 1	
Yaḥyā b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ṣalāḥ al-Sharafī	sayyid	Sharafī	n/d	n/a	2					
ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī al-ʿĀbid	sayyid	Sharafī	n/d	n/a	2					
ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī al-Jaḥḥāfī	sayyid	Jaḥḥāf	Rayma	n/a	3				yes, 2	

Ismāʿīl b. Ibrāhīm b. Yaḥyā al-Jaḥḥāfī	sayyid	Jaḥḥāf	n/d	n/a	2					
Muḥammad b. al-Hādī Ibn Jaḥḥāf	sayyid	Jaḥḥāf	n/d	n/a	2					
Muḥammad b. al-Mahdī b. Ibrāhīm al-Jaḥḥāfī	sayyid	Jaḥḥāf	n/d	n/a	2					
ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā b. ʿAlī al-Jaḥḥāfī	sayyid	Jaḥḥāf	Ḥabūr	n/a	2					
Muṭahhar b. Muḥammad al-Jurmūzī	sayyid	Jurmūzī	Dhamār, Wuṣāb, Ānis	n/a	3				yes, 2	
Ṣalāḥ b. Aḥmad b. al-Mahdī al-Muʾayyadī	sayyid	Muʾay-yadī	n/d	n/a	2	n/d			yes	
Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. imam al-Nāṣir Ḥasan	sayyid	Muʾay-yadī	Mukha	n/a	2				yes, 2	
Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Muʾayyadī	sayyid	Muʾay-yadī	n/d	n/a	2					
Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Muʾayyadī	sayyid	Muʾay-yadī	Ṣaʿda	n/a	2					
Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥūthī	sayyid	n/d	Ḥūth, Ẓafīr	n/a	2	n/a			yes	?
ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā b. ʿAbdallāh al-Hādawī	sayyid	n/d	Madwam	n/a	2				yes	
ʿAlī b. ʿAbdallāh al-Rughāfī	sayyid	n/d	Maʿāfir (Taʿizz)	n/a	2				yes	
al-Mahdī b. al-Hādī al-Yūsufī	sayyid	n/d	Khawlān	n/a	2				yes, 2	

Aḥmad b. al-Hādī b. Hārūn b. Ḥasan al-Hādawī	sayyid	n/d	n/d	n/a	2					
Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Jallāl al-Yaḥyawī	sayyid	n/d	n/d	n/a	2					
Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Miḥrābī	sayyid	n/d	Miḥrāb	n/a	2	n/d	?			?
Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥūthī	sayyid	n/d	Ḥūth, Ẓafīr	n/a	2					
Ḥusayn b. Ṣalāḥ b. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Ibn Nahshal	sayyid	n/d	n/d	n/a	2					
Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿIzz al-Dīn Ibn Shāh	sayyid	n/d	n/d	n/a	2					
Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Miḥrābī	sayyid	n/d	Miḥrāb	n/a	2					
Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Yūsufī	sayyid	n/d	Khawlān Ṣaʿda	n/a	2					
Nāṣir b. Dāwud b. Ṣalāḥ b. ʿAbdallāh b. Dāwud al-Ḍāʿinī	sayyid	n/d	n/d	n/a	2					
Yaḥyā b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Muntaṣir al-Qāsimī	sayyid	n/d	Ẓafīr	n/a	2					
ʿAlī b. al-Muntaṣir al-Hādawī	sayyid	n/d	n/d	n/a	2					

ʿIzz al-Dīn b. Durayb b. Muṭahhar al-Mūsawī	sayyid	n/d	Tihāma	n/a	2					
Ibrāhīm b. al-Hādī al-Niʿmī	sayyid	Niʿm	Tihāma	n/a	2					
ʿAlī b. Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Niʿmī	sayyid	Niʿm	Tihāma	n/a	2					
Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad b. ʿĀmir	sayyid	Qasimid	n/d	n/a	2				yes	
ʿAbdallāh b. ʿĀmir b. ʿAlī	sayyid	Qasimid	Ḥūth	n/a	2				yes, 1	
Muḥammad b. ʿĀmir b. ʿAlī	sayyid	Qasimid	Marhiba, Khārif, Banū Zuhayr	n/a	3				yes, 1	
Aḥmad b. al-imām Qāsim	sayyid	Qasimid	n/d	n/a	2				yes, 1&2	
Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. al-imām Qāsim	sayyid	Qasimid	Ṣaʿda	n/a	2				yes, 2	
Aḥmad b. Ḥasan b. al-imām Qāsim	sayyid	Qasimid	n/d	n/a	2					
Ḥusayn b. al-imām al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad	sayyid	Qasimid	n/D	n/a	2					
Ismāʿīl b. al-imām Qāsim	sayyid	Qasimid	n/d	n/a	2					
Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn b. al-imām Qāsim	sayyid	Qasimid	n/d	n/a	2					
Yaḥyā b. al-imām al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad	sayyid	Qasimid	n/d	n/a	2					

Yaḥyā b. Ḥusayn b. al-imām Qāsim	sayyid	Qasimid	n/d	n/a	2					
ʿAlī b. al-imām al-Muʾayyad Muḥammad	sayyid	Qasimid	n/d	n/a	2					
Nāṣir b. ʿAbd al-Rabb b. ʿAlī b. Shams al-Dīn	sayyid	Sharaf al-Dīn, Shams al-Dīn	Kawkabān, Taʿizz	n/a	3				yes, 2	
Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Ṣalāḥ al-ʿUbbālī	sayyid	ʿUbbālī	Ẓafīr Ḥajja	n/a	2					
Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Ṣalāḥ al-ʿUbbālī	sayyid	ʿUbbālī	Ẓafīr Ḥajja	n/a	2					
ʿIzz al-Dīn b. ʿAlī al-ʿUbbālī	sayyid	ʿUbbālī	Ṣanʿāʾ	n/a	2					
Yaḥyā b. Aḥmad b. Ḥābis al-Dawwārī	scholar	Dawwārī	Ṣaʿda	1	1	n/d				yes
Aḥmad b. Ṣalāḥ al-Dawwārī	scholar	Dawwārī	Ṣaʿda	1		1006				yes
ʿAbd al-Wahhāb b. Saʿīd al-Ḥiwālī*	scholar	Ḥiwālī	Ḥajja, Ṣanʿāʾ	1	n/a	n/d				no
Ibrāhīm b. Masʿūd al-Ḥiwālī*	scholar	Ḥiwālī	Ḥajja, Dhamār	1		n/d				no
Saʿd al-dīn b. Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Miswarī	scholar	Miswarī	n/d	1	1	n/d				no
ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Miswarī	scholar	Miswarī	n/d	1	1	n/d				no
ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad b. al-Muʿāfā al-Lāḥijī	scholar	Muʿāfā	Ānis	1	1	n/d				no

ʿAlī b. Yūsuf al-Ḥamāṭī	scholar	banū Ḥamāṭa	Ānis, Dhamār	1	n/a	1006				no
Yūsuf b. ʿAlī al-Ḥamāṭī	scholar	banū Ḥamāṭa	Ānis, Dhamār	1		1006				no
Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-ʿIyyānī	scholar	banū Ḥamāṭa	Ānis	1	n/a	1006				no
ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā al-Muḥayrisī	scholar	banū Ḥamāṭa	Ānis	1	n/a	1006				no
Ṣalāḥ b. Masʿūd al-Shaddādī	scholar	banū Shaddād	Khawlān	1		n/d				no
ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muntaṣir al-ʿAshabī	scholar	banū ʿAshab	Kuḥlān ʿAffār	1	1	n/d				no
Ṣalāḥ b. Muḥammad b. Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Falakī	scholar	Falakī	Dhamār	1	1	n/d				no
Saʿīd b. Ṣalāḥ al-Habal	scholar	Habal	Tihāma; Ṣaʿda; hijra Shawkān	1	1	n/d				no
ʿAlī b. Ṣalāḥ al-Ḥaḍrānī	scholar	Ḥaḍrānī	Ānis, Khārif	1	n/a	1006				no
Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Ṣalāḥ al-Ḥaḍrānī	scholar	Ḥaḍrānī	Ānis	1	1	n/d				no
Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbdallāh Ḥanash	scholar	Ḥanash	Dhībīn, Khārif	1		n/d				no
Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā Ibn Ḥanash	scholar	Ḥanash	n/d	1		1006				no
ʿAbd al-Hādī b. Aḥmad b. Ṣalāḥ al-Ḥasūsa	scholar	Ḥasūsa	Ṣanʿāʾ	1	1	n/d				no
ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad Ibn Abī al-Rijāl	scholar	Ibn Abī al-Rijāl	n/d	1	n/a	n/d				no

al-Hādī b. ʿAbdallāh Ibn Abī al-Rijāl	scholar	Ibn Abī al-Rijāl	Khārif, Arḥab	1		n/d				no
Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbdallāh Ibn Abī al-Rijāl	scholar	Ibn Abī al-Rijāl	n/d	1		n/d				no
ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Jamlūlī	scholar	Jamlūlī	Ahnūm	1	1	n/d				no
ʿAbdallāh b. Saʿīd al-Muhallā al-Sharafī	scholar	Muhallā	Kuḥlān ʿAffār	1	n/a	n/d				no
Aḥmad b. Qāsim al-Khawlānī	scholar	n/d	n/d	1	1	n/d				no
Ibrāhīm b. Ḥuthayth al-ʿAlī al-Dhamārī	scholar	n/d	Dhamār, bilād Ānis	1	1	n/d	yes			no
Luṭfallāh b. Muḥammad b. al-Ghiyāth al-Ẓafīrī	scholar	n/d	Mecca	1	1	n/d				no
Ṣalāḥ b. ʿAlī al-Wishāḥ	scholar	n/d	Ānis	1	1	n/d				no
Yaḥyā b. Ṣalāḥ al-Thulāʾī	scholar	n/d	n/d	1	1	n/d				no
ʿĀmir b. Muḥammad al-Dhamārī	scholar	n/d	Dhamār	1	1	1006				yes
ʿAlī b. Qāsim al-ʿAnsī al-ʿIyyānī	scholar	n/d	Baraṭ	1	2	n/d				no
Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Shakāyidhī	scholar	n/d	n/d	1	n/a	n/d	yes			no
Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Yaʿqūbī	scholar	n/d	n/d	1	n/a	n/d				yes
Muʿāfā b. Saʿīd al-Mawshakī al-Dhamārī	scholar	n/d	Dhamār	1	n/a	n/d				no
ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī al-Raḥbī	scholar	n/d	n/d	1	n/a	1006				no

ʿAlī b. Qāsim al-Sanḥānī	scholar	n/d	n/d	1	n/a	n/d				no
al-Hādī b. Yaḥyā Bishārī al-ʿAnsī al-ʿUdhrī	scholar	n/d	ʿAns, ʿUdhr	1		n/d				no
Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Aḍraʿī al-Dhamārī	scholar	n/d	Dhamār	1		n/d				no
Ṣalāḥ b. Ṣāliḥ al-Ānisī	scholar	n/d	Ānis	1		n/d				no
ʿAbd al-Qādir b. Ḥamza al-Tihāmī	scholar	n/d	Tihāma	1		1006				yes
Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Salafī	scholar	Salafī	Maṣāniʿ	1	1	n/d			yes, 1	no
Aḥmad b. Mūsā Suhayl	scholar	Suhayl	Ṣaʿda	1	1	n/d				yes
Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Suḥūlī	scholar	Suḥūlī	n/d	1	1	n/d	yes			no
Ḥasan b. Saʿīd al-ʿAyzarī	scholar	ʿAyzarī	Ahnūm	1	1	n/d				no
Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Aḥmad b. Ḥābis al-Dawwārī	scholar	Dawwārī	n/d	2		n/d				no
Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ghash(a)m	scholar	Ghashm	Lāʿa, Ānis	2	1	n/d				no
Aḥmad b. Saʿīd al-Habal	scholar	Habal	n/d	2	1	n/d				no
Mahdī b. Saʿīd al-Habal	scholar	Habal	n/d	2	1	n/d				no
ʿAlī b. Saʿīd al-Habal	scholar	Habal	n/d	2	1	n/d				no

Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā Ibn Salāma	scholar	Ibn Salāma	n/d	2	1	n/d				no
ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā Ibn Salāma	scholar	Ibn Salāma	n/d	2	1	n/d				no
Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ al-ʿAnsī al-ʿIyyānī	scholar	n/d	n/d	2	1	n/d				no
Ibrāhīm b. Yaḥyā / Muḥammad al-Mutamayyiz al-Ṣaʿdī	scholar	n/d	Ṣaʿda	2	2	n/d				yes
Ibrāhīm b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Suḥūlī	scholar	Suḥūlī	n/d	2	1	n/d				no
Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Ṣāliḥ b. Sulaymān al-Akwaʿ	scholar	Akwaʿ	n/d	n/a	1				yes, 2	
Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Ṣāliḥ b. Sulaymān al-Akwaʿ	scholar	Akwaʿ	n/d	n/a	1					
Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā b. Aḥmad Ibn Ḥābis al-Dawwārī	scholar	Dawwārī	Ṣaʿda	n/a	2				yes	
Aḥmad b. Saʿd al-Dīn al-Miswarī	scholar	Miswarī	n/d	n/a	1					
Zayd b. ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn al-Miswarī	scholar	Miswarī	n/d	n/a	1					
Nāṣir b. Jābir al-Asadī	scholar	Banū Asad	al-Sharaf	n/a	2					
Ṣāliḥ b. Muḥammad al-Ḥāfilī	scholar	banū Ḥamāṭa	Jabal Tays	n/a	2				yes	
ʿAbd al-Qādir b. ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā al-Muḥayrisī	scholar	banū Ḥamāṭa	Jabal Tays	n/a	2				yes	

Muḥammad b. Ṣalāḥ al-Falakī	scholar	Falakī	Dhamār, Madhḥij	n/a	2				yes	
Yaḥyā b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Ṣalāḥ al-Falakī	scholar	Falakī	Ibb, Dhī Jibla	n/a	2				yes	
Muḥammad b. Nāṣir b. Dughaysh al-Ghashmī	scholar	Ghashm	n/d	n/a	2					
ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ghasham	scholar	Ghashm	Ānis	n/a	2					
ʿAbd al-Qādir b. Saʿīd al-Habal	scholar	Habal	Ṣaʿda	n/a	1					
Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Muṭīr al-Ḥakamī al-Shāfiʿī	scholar	Ḥakamī	n/d	n/a	2					
Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Muṭīr al-Ḥakamī al-Shāfiʿī	scholar	Ḥakamī	n/d	n/a	2					
ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Muṭīr al-Ḥakamī al-Shāfiʿī	scholar	Ḥakamī	n/d	n/a	2					
ʿAbdallāh b. Yaḥyā Ibn Ḥanash	scholar	Ḥanash	Lāʿa	n/a	2				yes	
Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad Ibn Ḥanash	scholar	Ḥanash	Ẓafār	n/a	1					
Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbdallāh Ibn Ḥanash	scholar	Ḥanash	Dhībīn	n/a	1					
Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ḥarbī	scholar	Ḥarbī	Ṣanʿāʾ	n/a	2					

ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad al-Ḥarbī	scholar	Ḥarbī	Ṣanʿāʾ	n/a	2					
Mahdī b. ʿAbd al-Hādī b. Aḥmad al-Thulāʾī	scholar	Ḥasūsa	n/d	n/a	2					
ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Hādī b. Aḥmad al-Thulāʾī	scholar	Ḥasūsa	n/d	n/a	2					
Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Ḥubayshī al-Shāfiʿī	scholar	Ḥubayshī	Wuṣāb, Taʿizz	n/a	2					
ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Ḥubayshī al-Shāfiʿī	scholar	Ḥubayshī	Wuṣāb, Taʿizz	n/a	2					
ʿAlī b. Aḥmad Ibn Abī al-Rijāl	scholar	Ibn Abī al-Rijāl	n/d	n/a	1	n/d			yes	
Muḥammad b. al-Hadī b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Ibn Abī al-Rijāl	scholar	Ibn Abī al-Rijāl	Ṣaʿda, Khawlān	n/a	2				yes	
Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Aḥmad Ibn Abī al-Rijāl	scholar	Ibn Abī al-Rijāl	Ṣanʿāʾ	n/a	1					
Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Ibn Abī al-Rijāl	scholar	Ibn Abī al-Rijāl	n/d	n/a	2					
Isḥāq b. [Muḥammad] Jaghmān al-Shāfiʿī	scholar	Jaghmān	Zabīd	n/a	2					
Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Jamlūlī	scholar	Jamlūlī	n/d	n/a	2				yes	

ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd b. Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. ʿAmr Ibn al-Muʿāfā	scholar	Muʿāfā	n/d	n/a	2					
Abū-l-Qāsim al-Bayshī	scholar	n/d	Tihāma	n/a	1				yes	
Aḥmad b. Aḥmad b. Fayrūz al-Shāfiʿī	scholar	n/d	Ibb	n/a	2				yes	
Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Ibrāhīm b. Ṣalāḥ al-Ānisī	scholar	n/d	Ānis, banū Qushayb	n/a	2				yes	
Mahdī b. Jābir b. Naṣṣār al-ʿAffārī	scholar	n/d	ʿAffār, Ẓafīr	n/a	2				yes	
Ṣalāḥ b. Aḥmad al-Maḥbashī	scholar	n/d	Maḥābisha, al-Sharaf	n/a	2				yes	
ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Majrabī/Majzabī	scholar	n/d	Khawlān ʿAmr	n/a	2				yes	
ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā al-Shabībī	scholar	n/d	Maghārib Dhamār	n/a	2				yes	
Yaḥyā b. Aḥmad al-Mikhlāfī	scholar	n/d	Ḥayma	n/a	3				yes, 1	
Aḥmad b. ʿĀmir b. Muḥammad al-Dhamārī	scholar	n/d	Dhamār, bilād banī Siḥām in Khawlān	n/a	1					
Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Rūsī	scholar	n/d	Rūs	n/a	1	n/d				
Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Muʿawwiḍa b. ʿAlī al-Shabībī al-Ḥawdī	scholar	n/d	Miqrāʾī, Dhamār	n/a	1					
Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Qāsim al-ʿAnsī al-ʿIyyānī	scholar	n/d	Baraṭ	n/a	2					

Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ al-Yūsufī	scholar	n/d	Ḥayma, Ḥabasha	n/a	2					
Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ṣaʿfānī al-Shāfiʿī	scholar	n/d	Ḥarāz	n/a	2					
Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Qāsim al-ʿAnsī al-ʿIyyānī	scholar	n/d	Baraṭ	n/a	2					
Ṣalāḥ b. Nahshal al-Dhunūbī	scholar	n/d	Dhunūb	n/a	2					
Ṣāliḥ b. Masʿūd al-Ḥājib	scholar	n/d	Shaẓab	n/a	2					
Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Kandaḥī	scholar	n/d	Ḥayma, Ṣanʿāʾ	n/a	2					
Ṣiddīq b. Nāṣir al-Sawādī	scholar	n/d	Jawf, Ṣaʿda, Khawlān	n/a	2					yes
ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad al-ʿUthmānī al-Shāfiʿī	scholar	n/d	Rayma	n/a	2					
ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Ḥaymī	scholar	n/d	Ḥayma, Ṣanʿāʾ	n/a	2					
ʿAbd al-Wahhāb b. ʿAlī al-Simḥī al-Shāfiʿī	scholar	n/d	ʿUtma, Wuṣāb, Rayma	n/a	2					
ʿAlī b. Maejān al-Shāfiʿī	scholar	n/d	Taʿizz	n/a	2					
ʿAbd al-Baqī b. ʿAbd al-Salām b. ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ḥusayn al-Nuzaylī al-Shāfiʿī	scholar	Nuzaylī	n/d	n/a	2					
ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Nuzaylī al-Shāfiʿī	scholar	Nuzaylī	n/d	n/a	2					

ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Nuzaylī al-Shāfiʿī	scholar	Nuzaylī	n/d	n/a	2					
Muṭahhar b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Nuʿmān al-Ḍamadī	scholar	Nuʿmān	Tihāma	n/a	1					
Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Salafī	scholar	Salafī	Maṣāniʿ	n/a	2				yes	
Muḥammad b. Ṣalāḥ al-Salāmī al-Ānisī	scholar	Salāmī	Ānis	n/a	1	n/d				
ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad b. Ṣalāḥ al-Salāmī	scholar	Salāmī	Ānis, Yarīm	n/a	1					
Ḥifẓallāh b. Aḥmad Ibn Suhayl	scholar	Suhayl	al-Ahnūm	n/a	2				yes	
Ḥusayn b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Suḥūlī	scholar	Suḥūlī	Ṣanʿāʾ	n/a	2				yes	
Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Yaḥyā al-Suḥūlī	scholar	Suḥūlī	n/d	n/a	2					
Aḥmad b. Jābir b. Sharaf al-Dīn al-ʿAyzarī	scholar	ʿAyzarī	Ahnūm	n/a	2					
Ibrāhīm b. Ḥasan al-ʿAyzarī	scholar	ʿAyzarī	n/d	n/a	2					

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